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Coming Together: Principals' Leadership, Parental Involvement and Community Building in Education

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Coming Together: Principals' Leadership, Parental Involvement and Community
Building in Education

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE
OF EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP AND COUNSELING OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

By

Ibrahim Alhumam

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FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS, MINNESOTA

Coming Together: Principals' Leadership, Parental Involvement and Community
Building in Education

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Halah, for always being there for me, being interested in my dissertation study and offering rich and meaningful discussions and engagement in my research topic. Without Halah's unconditional support, it would have been difficult at times to find the motivation necessary for such a huge project and undertaking. I also want to thank my father, who has recently passed, that would tell me often and always that I will achieve my dreams and that nothing is too difficult to accomplish, and he believes in me and my talent. This has provided a great deal of relief and calmness knowing I have my father's confidence. My mother as well as been an invaluable source of constant encouragement, and her care and thoughtfulness have provided me the emotional guidance to undertake this journey. I also want to say thank you to my children, Latif, Nora, Ahmed, and Adam for their patience with me as I sacrificed time with them to work on this project. Their understanding means more to me than they will ever know. I am thankful for Ahmed's strength when he was a baby and needed to have heart surgery. It was a very difficult time for our family, and he was strong and courageous and is now a thriving, happy little boy who is my joy. I would also like to thank Adam for coming into this world and bringing me a delightful, beautiful son. I look back and am in awe of how much my family has been through and how we have weathered so many storms, yet shared so much happiness. Also, to my homeland of Saudi Arabia, thank you for this opportunity to develop professionally and personally, and to become a leader in my educational role.

ABSTRACT

Parental involvement is an important aspect of the educational environment, and school administrators, educators, and staff are challenged to find creative and innovative ways to increase familial involvement. Given the recognition of the importance and challenges to parental involvement, researchers and educators have long studied how parental engagement can be facilitated and sustained. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how transformational leadership can be applied by school principals in an educational setting, as a useful and effective strategy toward increasing parental involvement in an elementary school setting. Data were collected from three observations and 10 interviews, as well as review of nine communication documents related to teacher, parent, and principal communication. In applying Epstein (2001) and Burn's (1978) theory, the dynamic nature of power-sharing and bi-directional communication was elucidated and guided identification of the core themes of a successful transformational leader, by way of increasing and sustaining parental involvement. Data were analyzed using grounded theory procedures of initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006). Four major themes were identified and illustrated in a new model: Influence of Transformational Principals on Bi-Directional Relationships and Familial Involvement. This theoretical model depicts an environment where the transformational principal and families through bi-directional relationships, encourages reciprocal communication flow that maximizes the likeness of a school environment that exudes familial involvement.

Keywords: Familial Involvement, Transformational Leadership, Bi-Directional Relationships

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an outline for a qualitative case study with grounded theory analysis which provides insight into how public Elementary School (K-5) principals may support community and family involvement in the school. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) defined familial involvement in schools as a familial commitment of resources and time to the school and their student's education. Familial involvement in public elementary schools has been of research interest for decades. Theorists and researchers have worked to understand how families are involved in the education of their children. Stakeholders for familial involvement include families, educators, and school leaders, as well as community members, non-profits, and businesses. Familial involvement in education continues to be theorized and reviewed in terms of quantity, quality, and context (Pomerantz et al., 2007).

There are widely held beliefs that it is the responsibility of the schools to promote familial involvement in education and in doing so, the student outcomes will improve, as well as their relationship with family members and the community (Goodall & Harris, 2008; Lee & Shute, 2010). This expectation is surmised from the belief that families have a right to participate in how schools are run and in the decision-making process (Becker & Epstein, 1982). Parent involvement extends past attendance at school events, and includes familial involvement in student behaviors such as homework and amount of time spent in instruction (Epstein, 2001). Familial involvement strengthens the infrastructure of the school by building and maintaining important relationships among families (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Educators and families work together to build strong communication channels, shared dialogue happens as relationships are built, and

they understand each other's personal needs and individual perspectives of the school (Blankenstein, 2004).

School leaders can develop authentic parent relationships with strategic planning and inviting participation in school matters. Because many schools struggle with lack of parent participation, leaders are motivated to understand why and how it fails. For example, participation matters; yet schools rarely achieve familial involvement to the expected degree (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Principals can positively influence parent connections and student achievement by removing barriers to familial involvement (Epstein, 2001). According to Epstein and Dauber (1991), "Parents are more likely to become partners in their children's education if they perceive that the schools have strong practices to involve parents at school" (p. 289). Engaged school leaders who value familial involvement seek ways to reduce these barriers and ask how they can best respond to families' needs. Families of diversity wish for accessibility, invitation, and welcome from their school leaders and families (Pena, 2000). As such, attitudes of leadership must provide respect and value for families and adjust expectations in light of familial needs. As familial involvement becomes better understood, the definition moves beyond traditional measures into parent engagement and parent partnerships (Rothengast, 2016). The intentions and outcomes from principal actions instrumentally impact and guide familial involvement.

Statement of the Problem

Familial involvement in education gained significant traction in the 1800s, emerging from religious ideology, social class, and advanced awareness and interest of parents in their children's education (Pulliam & Van Patten, 1999). Since that time,

familial involvement has changed in policy support and scope, landing today as “those systems, processes, policies, procedures, and practices that allow parents and family to be a credible component within the academic lives of their children” (Constantino, 2003, p. 10). Today, familial involvement in the schools is highly desired, yet poorly understood, despite the great deal of research interest in the topic. This research was intended to better understand how familial involvement in public elementary schools may be advanced. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will enlighten the theorists and researchers who seek to better understand factors for familial involvement in public elementary schools. Significant gaps exist in familial involvement research, with much research focused on how the school may incite change and how leaders may be trained to encourage more familial involvement. For example, Epstein’s model (2001) describes a transactional relationship, where the principal is directing change on behalf of the families by creating six types of parent involvement. This research intended to address these gaps by engaging both families and school personnel in understanding the problem of lack of familial involvement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to use grounded theory and case study methodologies to explore how familial involvement in the public school elementary setting may be advanced through innovative and creative approaches and strategies. These best practices were derived through the use of qualitative data collection and analysis procedures. I sought a deeper understanding of what practices were beneficial to advance in order to capture the body of techniques that have proven to be effective for increasing familial involvement. Furthermore, I hoped to assist school principals

interested in advancing supportive familial involvement practice by making recommendations on how to advance familial involvement in the school setting. This study employed school personnel (principal, teachers, and school counselor), and parents as participants, involved observations of several school events, and reviewed documents to understand how familial involvement was advanced. The goal of this research was to seek multiple perspectives on how familial involvement may be increased and fill current gaps in the research to prepare all school stakeholders to engage in familial involvement advancing practices.

Research Questions

To understand how the school principal may advance strategies, activities, and behaviors to facilitate familial involvement, four research questions were developed.

These include:

1. How do school principals engage parents and the community and facilitate their involvement in the school?
2. How do parents feel about the principal's leadership?
3. What barriers and challenges do school principals encounter with facilitating parent and community involvement?
4. What strategies are employed for addressing these challenges?

Significance of the Study

There is growing evidence that familial involvement in the schools is a priority activity for school leadership to advance in order to make their schools more academically and socially successful for students. In my role as an educator, I often wondered how the principal and families could better connect and develop an authentic

relationship that would facilitate familial involvement and investment in the school. As such, the significance of this research is to provide for principals and families practical and effective strategies and activities that may advance familial involvement in the school, which provides for a reciprocal relationship and commitment from both the principal and the family.

While principals are the leaders of the school, parents also provide influence and direction. However, much research attention is directed toward how the principal may advance the success of the school. As such, the implications for this research extend beyond school personnel. For example, school principals need to be empowered in order to be successful (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Bennis and Nanus (1985) found when school principals are empowered, they have the confidence to take the school to the next level of success. However, the principal cannot empower themselves. This empowerment relies on reciprocity between other school stakeholders. As such, participatory involvement is important to advance principal success (Burns, 1978).

This study is significant in that it offers solutions that both families and principals can adopt to work together toward advancing the success of the school through familial involvement. Pellicer et al. (1990) supported participatory involvement, and Shanahan (1988) found effective principals allowed others to participate in important decision-making tasks and define goals and objectives for the organization. This study offers concrete solutions and strategies for both principals and families to adopt, to advance together a participatory approach and work toward bi-directional relationships that will facilitate familial involvement.

Reflexive Statement

I first arrived in the United States in 2011 with my family. I enrolled my oldest child, Latif, in kindergarten at a public elementary school in Seattle, Washington. He was scared and fearful as he was new to the country, did not speak the language, and could not understand the directions of the teacher or communicate with his classmates. He was a quiet boy, but he got involved in a fight by accident one time and ended up being suspended for three days. My wife and I were very concerned about how my son was being treated, as his behavior was uncharacteristic of him. After speaking to the principal and voicing my concerns, the principal was uninterested in my son and resolving the challenges he was facing. The principal did not offer any solutions except for punishment, and a distrustful and cold relationship between the two of us was established where we avoided each other and were generally resentful of one another.

The same issues occurred in Saudi Arabia. As a teacher there, I saw there was a disconnect between the parents and principals, with the principals not communicating to the parents or asking the parents for insights into a student's behavior. When problems in the school became known, teachers were often blamed, and the principal was never considered as the culprit. Not surprisingly, parental involvement was low. Principals did not support parental involvement and made decisions for students without parent input. Taken together, my son's struggles and general observations of the lack of principal interest in parental involvement, I realized that difficulty in principals and parents connecting was a global problem. Two years later, my family moved to Colorado. We were careful to choose a school that fostered parent involvement. Unlike during our move

to Seattle, the transition to public schooling in Colorado Springs went smoothly, and our son excelled academically.

Creswell (2003) indicated qualitative researchers should identify their personal values, assumptions, and biases at the onset of the study. This self-analysis is well suited for qualitative research, as qualitative research encourages researchers to be transparent about their biases. As such, it was important to understand my role as the researcher in this study and clarify my situation in relation to the study. I am closely connected to the study topic, as I have been a teacher for the last 10-years in my country, prior to coming to the US to study. I am also a parent in the school, as I have one child currently enrolled there, and another child who attended previously. In 2015, my family and I moved to Minnesota, we made concerted efforts to find a school that would support parents involvement, and we were eager to support familial involvement ourselves. Therefore, we used our experience in Colorado to help us understand what we were looking for in schools, and also looking for a school for our daughter, who was just starting kindergarten. In the new school in Minnesota, we found that the school principal was warm and welcoming. She encouraged us to be involved and we were struck by how engaged both the principal and the families were in the school and each other. Our children's education became something the school and our family did together.

These differences in experiences in the United States brought light to the problem of familial involvement, in that some schools are successful in attempts to engage families, and other schools prefer to not engage with families at all. This appears reasonable to expect, as principals face extreme public demands to be able to measure school success, while at the same time are expected to be community leaders which has

taxed school principals with an impossible number of duties and expectations. However, despite the ever increasing social and administrative demands made on principals, some are very successful at bringing the community together and fostering a healthy and engaged school environment where the families and the principal work in tandem to achieve shared goals as I experienced in my comparisons between the Seattle and Minnesota public schools. As I anticipate engaging in school leadership upon my return to work in education, I am personally interested and find value in better understanding how effective leadership may be practiced in the schools. The positive experience in the United States provided me with hope and inspiration that an engaged parent body is possible and is worth the effort. I also realized it is the principal who must drive these efforts. As such, my study looked at the school principal as the main contributor to parental involvement and examined qualities and behaviors a successfully transformational principal might provide.

Overview of Chapters

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, I introduced the study, which included background information and an explanation of the problem. This chapter also related the significance of the study and the proposed purpose. A review of the literature as it relates to familial involvement in the schools may be found in Chapter Two. This chapter also details the history of principals in American schools, and the trajectory of familial involvement in the schools from the 1700s to today. In Chapter Three, I described the methodology and methods along with the rationale for choosing the methods including the qualitative approach I applied, which included interviews, observations, and document review. The findings of my study are revealed in Chapter

Four. Finally, in Chapter Five, I describe the resulting theoretical model from which my data was grounded, limitations, and implications for future researchers, principals, and parents.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the literature regarding the topic of family involvement in the American education system from colonial times (1607-1776) until the present day. I focused on the following components in my review: laws that have attempted to establish legislative standards for parental involvement, the evolving administrative and community role of principals, and the changing ways principals have engaged with parents over the course of this history. Additionally, I describe Joyce Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence (Epstein, 2001), which focuses on how partnerships among families, schools, and the community bring all three levels of influence closer together. This theory incorporates six types of parental involvement instrumental to a child's development and educational success.

I also describe transformational leadership, a conceptual model for educational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Berson & Avolio, 2004; Leithwood, 1994). Transformational leadership involves the focus on school reform through the improvement of school conditions. Importantly, there is always a concern in grounded theory research for the potential that literature review may bias a researcher's thinking and analysis (Dunne, 2011; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Here, I take the position of Cathy Urquhart ((Bryant & Charmaz, 2007), that the literature review is a beneficial orienting process for grounded theory researchers by providing an understanding of the current thinking in the field. Of course, it is important to make sure these insights do not influence the research study itself. The ability to orient the process is especially important when a researcher studies broader topic such as communication and leadership.

The Issue's Historical Significance

In the United States, the history of education has been at the forefront from the 17th to the 21st century. The late 16th and early 17th century were an important period of exploration of ideas for education related to the social contract and public education as espoused by Locke, Rousseau, and others (Spring, 1986). Spring (1986) suggested this is due to the change from parent education to public education that occurred first in Europe and then was espoused in America. In order to understand how the current educational system came to be, a historical examination of public schools' education is warranted.

17th Century Education (1/1/1601 - 12/31/1700)

As early as the late 16th and early 17th century, ideas about community and public education were being discussed by early education reformers and philosophers such as Locke and Rousseau (Spring, 1986). The 17th century in the US comprised period one and two of the Colonial America Time Period. During this time was the founding of the first colonies (1607-1650; period one), and trade and history of the first colonists (1650-1696; period two). Cremin (1970) said during the colonial period the Bible was “the single most important cultural influence in the lives of Anglo-Americans” (p. 40). The family believed it was their responsibility to teach their children how to learn and live, and the government was to protect life and property. As such, education was not widely viewed by colonists as a responsibility of the civil government but of the family.

The early colonists first tried to educate by the traditional English methods of family, church, community, and apprenticeship, with schools later known for being socializing agents (Cremin, 1970). The rudiments of literacy and arithmetic were taught in the home, assuming the parents had those skills. Literacy rates were high in New

England because much of the population had learned to read in order to read the Scriptures. Literacy was much lower in the South, where the Anglican Church was established. Working-class people formed a large bulk of the population, working as servants. The planter class did not support public education but arranged for private tutors for their children and sent some to England at appropriate ages for further education.

In 1635, the first public school in the future United States was established in Boston, Massachusetts (Pulliam, 1987). Known as the Boston Latin School, this boys-only public secondary school was led by schoolmaster Philemon Pormont, a Puritan settler. The Boston Latin School was strictly for college preparation. It was modeled after the Free Grammar School of Boston, England. The English school taught Latin and Greek and was centered on the humanities. Some of the Boston Latin School's most well-known alumni include John Hancock and Samuel Adams. Benjamin Franklin was a dropout. The Boston Latin School is still a fully functioning public school, with students enrolled in grades 7-12. However, it has changed with time, becoming coeducational in 1972 and moving locations several times. It is now in Boston's Fenway neighborhood. Admission to Boston Latin is very competitive and is limited to residents of the city (Pulliam, 1987).

In 1642 the Massachusetts Bay Colony was the first to make "proper" education compulsory; other New England colonies then followed suit. Similar statutes were adopted in other colonies in the 1640s and 1650s. Despite these statutes, formal education was mostly gained by wealthy men and was not commonplace for all children (Pulliam, 1987).

18th Century Education (1/1/1701 - 12/31/1800)

As the American colonies continued to grow and prosper in the early 18th century, European influences over education were losing their influence, though religion was still an important aspect of the curriculum (Pulliam, 1987). In the colonies, there was a clear need to build and maintain commerce, agriculture, and shipping interests which took the focus away from education. The American Revolution was the culmination of this movement away from the European traditions and the end result was independence for the 13 colonies from Great Britain. The late 18th century saw the beginning and ending of the Revolutionary War (1775-1783) upon which meaningful education reform was attempted by Congress (Pulliam, 1987). Many American leaders, including Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), began championing for a more extensive and structured public education system.

Jefferson argued democracy required all the citizens receive an education so they could be informed and vote (Pulliam, 1987). Jefferson did not want to dictate to parents or local communities on how to educate their children. Instead, he proposed everyone could be educated in the way they saw fit as long as they passed certain national examinations. Jefferson eloquently argued for public education for all children in the Commonwealth of Virginia. His argument was that America's citizens required certain basic skills in order to function in a democratic society (Pulliam, 1987). These skills included reading, writing, and rhetoric. Because most of America's European immigrants did not possess such skills, and were, therefore, incapable of properly educating their own children, Jefferson stated Virginia should provide public schooling for every child. He believed citizens required the ability to read the printed word and communicate clearly in

both oral and written form in order to be free to make rational decisions in the community and nation. He feared uninformed citizens could easily become pawns of political activists (Jefferson & Lee, 1997).

Education at this time was reserved for white men (Pulliam & Van Patten, 1999). Women, for the most part, received little or no formal education during the 17th and 18th centuries. Further, women were largely educated at home. In some instances, girls attended dame schools. Wealthy families would sometimes hire a teacher to teach girls sewing, drawing, music, and languages such as French. In 1792, Sarah Pierce established the Litchfield Female Academy in 1792 where 3000 girls were educated. Education for Black slaves was forbidden initially. Later, the abolitionist movement provided educational opportunities for African Americans. Quakers facilitated this change, establishing racially integrated schools in cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. One exceptional effort to educate free Blacks in the South involved the work of John Chavis, a well-educated free African American (Pulliam & Van Patten, 1999). In 1831, Chavis conducted classes in a school in Raleigh, North Carolina, for whites during the day and for free Blacks in the evenings. Sunday Schools, which were founded in part to provide literary, religious, and moral instruction to working class and poor rural children, also educated some slaves at this time (Pulliam & Van Patten, 1999).

An 18th century education reformer, Benjamin Rush, was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and a member of the Continental Congress (Rush, 1786). Rush agreed with Jefferson on the importance of education in order to maintain a true democracy. He argued, in his 1786 piece *Thoughts Upon the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic*, "Our schools of learning, by producing one general and uniform system of

education, will render the mass of the people more homogeneous and thereby fit them more easily for uniform and peaceable government” (Rush, 1786, p. 8). Rush advocated a strict and rigid system of schooling that would force children to become honest and productive citizens (Rippa, 1988). Ultimately, resistance to government-funded education within the government was strong. In both 1778 and 1780, Jefferson failed to get an education reform bill passed through Congress. James Madison attempted to carry the legislation through Congress but met the same fate as Jefferson as resistance to government funded education remained strongly held. In 1796, an edited version of the bill finally passed through Congress as the Act to Establish Public Schools (Jefferson & Lee, 1997). This act put into place, for the first time, a plan to educate all white men and assure all white men were learning the same information. It laid a foundation for curriculum and methodology in education.

19th Century Education (1/1/1801 - 12/31/1900)

In the 19th century, education moved from being reserved to the mostly wealthy to being state-sponsored (Cremin, 1970). The first public school was established in 1821, and in 1867 the US Department of Education was instated. Howard University, the first HBCU, was established at this time, which provided college education for African American students (Cole, 2008). By 1870, public schools were in each state, but their survival depended on funding. Many closed because they could not afford teachers or supplies. The Father of Education, Horace Mann, a state legislator and state senator in 1833-1840 embarked on making public education part of American life (Cremin, 1970).

In 1837, Mann became the Secretary of Education and published on the integral relationship between education, freedom, and Republican government (Cremin, 1970).

He wanted a school that would be available and equal for all, part of the birth-right of every American child, to be for rich and poor alike. Mann found "social harmony" where everyone works and learns in peace, to be his primary goal of the school (Cremin, 1970). He believed a common school would be the "great equalizer." Poverty would most assuredly disappear as a broadened popular intelligence tapped new treasures of natural and material wealth. Mann felt through education, crime would decline sharply as would a host of moral vices like violence and fraud. In sum, there was no end to the social good which might be derived from a common school (Cremin, 1970). As Secretary of the Board of Education, Mann presided over the establishment of the first public normal school in the United States at Lexington in 1839. Mann also reinvigorated the 1827 law establishing high schools, and 50 high schools were created during his tenure. He also persuaded the Massachusetts legislature to establish a six-month minimum school year in 1839. Mann also led the movement to set up teacher institutions throughout the state (Cremin, 1970). Mann won his victory as the public school soon stood as one of the characteristic features of American life; A "wellspring" of freedom and a "ladder of opportunity" for millions of white men. Fueled by Mann's vision, the development of a public-school system was in almost every state by 1860 for white men.

20th Century Education (1/1/1901 - 12/31/2000)

The multiage, multigrade, single-room schoolhouse was mostly absent at the beginning of the 20th century but still existed in a handful of rural spaces (Thattai, 2001). During the beginning of the 20th century, the common model was an eight-year elementary school and a four-year high school. In 1910, a six–three–three system was introduced with elementary school, middle school, and then high school. Additionally,

the concept of equity in education was introduced where issues of wealth, religion, race, sex, ethnic origins, and disabilities were forefront. Educators had to determine the best way to educate a wide range of diverse students. During the 1950s, the emphasis shifted to making education an equal opportunity and taking affirmative action to ensure availability of education for all. This would mean, irrespective of differences in sex, religion, race and ethnicity, or wealth, all would receive an equitable education (Thattai, 2001).

The impact of equity in education was clear by the 1970s, when African Americans and other minorities first achieved significant, widespread gains in education (Thattai, 2001). People with physical and mental disabilities were included in regular school spaces. In 1958, the federal government-initiated measures to train teachers to teach children with intellectual disabilities, and in 1975 the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 further supported initiatives to support equal education for children with disabilities, later revised in 1990 and titled the Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This legislation underwent massive revisions in 1997 and again in 2004. The objectives of the latest revisions were to integrate students with disabilities into the mainstream of regular schools as far as was feasible (Thattai, 2001).

Brief History of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement in their children's learning long predates the formal American education system. From the 17th century to the 19th century, the educating role ascribed to parents ranged from formal academic disciplines and trade skills to behavior and ethical values (Berger, 1991). Throughout American colonial times, communities began to formalize schools through fees and other funding structures. Thus, it was an

education system built and controlled through parents—specifically parents with monetary means—impacting everything from curriculum development to hiring practices (Spring, 1986). This role was further formalized through township school boards made up of parents from local communities (Pulliam & Van Patten, 1999). Parental involvement was viewed by religious leaders as a means to embody and transmit the religious views and class distinctions of their founding sects on to their children.

The evolution of parental involvement in education emerged from religious ideology, social class, and increased awareness of the importance of parental knowledge about their children. America's early history of parental involvement in education has had long lasting impacts. Even today, when children often spend more time with teachers than with their own parents, education is still socially viewed as the central responsibility—if not primary responsibility—of parents and guardians. In short, while educational institutions may have changed the location and means of childhood learning, they have not diminished the social importance placed on parental involvement (Epstein, 1990).

In the late 19th and early 20th century, public schools began to assume some of the responsibilities previously taken on by parents. Schools necessarily took on a larger social role when states began passing compulsory education laws leading to a rapid boom in school enrollment between 1900-1944 (de Carvalho, 2001). In addition, these changes reflected schools' response to societal changes such as the emancipation of women and ethnic integration. Thus, schools took it upon themselves to be sites of American socialization in the face of increasing diversity and focused on assimilation of all students (Berger, 1981).

Yet, buoyed by a growing middle class and reinforced by deeply entrenched beliefs in a Puritan ethos emphasizing hard work, families continued to stay involved with their children's education (de Carvalho, 2001). Later in the 20th century, parental involvement in schools developed to include stay-at-home mothers as paraprofessionals. While the primary reason for this additional parental involvement was based on the belief that parents know best for their children, there were secondary benefits of reducing budget expenditures, as if families were involved in the school, the school would not have to pay workers to do the same work (Gestwicki, 2007).

Toward the end of the century, Seeley (1989) identified another period of change in parental involvement, declaring "a new paradigm" which increasingly included parents in decision-making processes in efforts to deepen community accountability. The new paradigm was a shift from the rationale American society held that Seeley referred to as the delegation model. The delegation model stipulates that government agencies are to be held responsibility for performing their duties, and people are responsible for paying taxes. Reliance on the delegation model consequently created a fundamental gap between the schools and the parents, with parents sometimes resistant to becoming involved as they either subtly or overtly claim that the job of education has been delegated to the schools (Seely, 1989).

Seeley (1989) described a societal shift toward viewing parental involvement in the schools as essential. As a result, schools willingly and intentionally broke away from the delegation model and to the value of parental involvement for goal setting and goal reaching, which has become better documented and widely accepted. However, Seeley also explained that though the delegation model is losing favor, there is still a strong

commitment to the delegation model in many US societies. In addition, Seeley (1989) explained some educators may feel a shift away from the delegation model is not feasible and will not work without a lot of additional effort and funding.

Examples of Family Involvement

Extensive research has been done that supports the connection between parent involvement and improved student achievement in schools (Epstein et al., 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Epstein & Sheldon, 2006; VanVoorhis & Sheldon, 2004). When families are involved in the school, there is an increase in achievement of the students (Epstein, 2001). “The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence in their children’s achievement in school and through life” (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 2). “The field (school, family, and community partnerships) has been strengthened by supporting federal, state, and local policies” (Epstein, 1995, p. 9). In 1965, Congress established the Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESEA) under President Lyndon B. Johnson (Paul, 2016). This act established funding for elementary and secondary schools without establishing a national curriculum.

The value of family involvement was also advanced in 1897 by families who organized and formed the National Congress of Mothers (NCM). This group, composed of middle- and upper-class mothers, met with teachers on Saturdays and expressed their concerns to the school principal through petitions. These mothers studied school curricula, became informed about child growth and development, and encouraged other parents to be active in the school. They were particularly active in securing public school kindergarten programs and health programs. The NCM worked for children and youth programs through national, state, and local volunteer units. The influence of this group

spread rapidly and formed the basis of the Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) which is active on almost every American school site today. Butts and Cremin (1953) explained the PTA was growing across the country and students even began to have some input and voice into improving the school as the idea of a “community school” began to capture the imagination and loyalty of those members of the professional and the public who were genuinely devoted to improving the school.

Beginning in the 1970s, parents went to court in order to change the student structure and racism within the public schools as it relates to social justice. In a landmark court case, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), the court ruled that separate but equal schools for Black and white children were not equitable and failing to provide equality in educational opportunity. This ruling prompted desegregation cases in major cities such as Boston, Detroit, and Los Angeles, which forced public schools to attend to the demographics of their student populations and reflect ethnic diversity. In *Serrano v. Priest* (1971), a parent sued the schools, which resulted in state-wide equalization of school funding. Additionally, in *Lau v. Nichols* (1973) bilingual education programs were established so that non-English speaking students equally benefited from public education. The ruling that resulted from *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971) led to legislation for equal access to public education for handicapped children.

In addition to court rulings, parent involvement has been promoted by the work of educational researchers whose studies have shown the benefits of parent involvement and parent education on student achievement in schools (Seeley, 1989). This knowledge has since been incorporated into educational legislation, which mandated parent involvement

components. The first federally funded legislation, Project Head Start (1964), which served disadvantaged urban children, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, required parents to be included in school advisory boards and actively engaged as volunteers in classroom activities. The Education for All Handicapped Act in 1974 required parents to be part of the decision-making process for determining their child's educational program, including when they started and ended the program. Each child was to have an individualized education plan (IEP) developed by a team that included the parents. In 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the accompanying law P.L. 94-142 were passed. This program required parents of children with special needs to monitor their children's progress in the Individualized Education Program (IEP). It also required the parents to be deeply involved in planning their child's education (Gestwicki, 2007). Under this legislation, educational access for children with disabilities was guaranteed, and the "rights of children with disabilities and their parents [were] protected" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

In 1994, Congress passed "Goals 2000: Educate America Act," a piece of education legislation aimed at setting measurable goals and standards for the American public-school system. Part of this law required each state to develop policies that increased parent/school collaboration to support the academic work of these children at home (Epstein et al., 2002). Other programs aimed at integrating school and community include school nutrition programs like The National School Lunch Program, and School Breakfast Program (USDA, 2017). In 2002, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation was signed into law. While the law is best known for its role in implementing quantifiable school standards, it also instituted several measures aimed at the relationship

between parents and school administrations. Among these measures, the bill gave parents more rights to information regarding their child's progress and the overall performance of the school (Henderson, 2002). It required schools to provide understandable curricula, parent-teacher meetings, funds for transportation and childcare, and even home-visits to facilitate parent involvement (Thurston, 2005). This law also required schools to provide training for parents to enhance their ability to engage with school programs (Gestwicki, 2007). Furthermore, NCLB contained provisions for Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRC) to specifically assist parents of low-income children, as specified under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). PIRCs have also been shown to grow relationships between parents, teachers, principals, and school personnel (Gestwicki, 2007). The legacy of these particular measures in NCLB has been a shift toward increased involvement of parents, and a greater value placed on parental involvement by policymakers, teachers, and school administrators.

History of School Principals

The diversity of parents who send their children through school doors each year extends across all cultures and languages. Parents bring their children into the school setting, carrying unique and culturally varied belief systems and experiences, and want what is best for their children. As such, it is imperative that the school principal create bridges for the parents to the school and feel welcome and safe in the school (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Also, Rapp and Duncan (2012) explained it is important for the principal to follow best-practices when implementing activities and strategies to engage parents. They explained the principal should make the message very clear that each child is

valued, and the school climate feels welcoming from the moment people step inside the doors. The school principal should ensure all school staff create an environment where parents are welcome. Baquedano-Lopez et al. (2013) cautioned parental involvement may look different depending on the cultural background of the parent. Often, approaches for parental involvement apply restricted roles for parents to become engaged, thus limiting the number of parents who qualify, and excluding parents who would otherwise be involved. As such, the authors suggested educators and researchers understand non-normative parental involvement in schools, thus increasing educational equity. While principals are practically universal among contemporary schools in the United States, their presence is in fact a relatively recent phenomenon. In early American education, schools were simply one-room school houses; educational and administrative responsibilities were entirely held by a single teacher. Later, as schools grew, an educational hierarchy was established wherein more experienced teachers—or, “principal teachers”—would preside over newer staff (Roald et al., 1987). This division of roles continued until the early 20th century.

Alongside, there was a rapid expansion of American public education in the 1920s, the role of the principal teachers expanded as well. For the first time, administrative, managerial, and supervisory duties were designated specifically to principals and separated from teachers (Cuban, 1988). And since then, the role of principals has only continued to increase in scope. As described by Crum and Sherman (2008), over the course of the 20th century, principals took on additional outward-facing responsibilities, the educational focal point for diplomacy, negotiation, and public

relations. Schmider et al. (1994) situated this growth within an increasing emphasis on site-based school management.

The public demands to measure school success, particularly in the age of technology and standardized testing, have served to further broaden the role of principals as both community leader and educational CEO. As Rock (2015) argued, this has amounted to an “astronomical growth” in the duties and obligations of school principals over the past few decades. NCLB served to make these obligations increasingly public-facing; an emphasis on standardized measurements declaring school success—and failure—has served to put schools under a microscope with principals the subject of particular focus (Rock, 2015).

In light of these increasing social and administrative demands, principals are leaders with a difficult-to-measure effect on the very organizations they preside over. This is due to educational research that has consistently found, over several decades, principal influence is not direct but mediated through many different mechanisms (Nir & Hameiri, 2014). Bass and Bass (2008) suggested principals who employ measures to promote school performance, such as using powerbases to change teachers and staff's negative attitudes, are more successful as leaders. There is also evidence to suggest a connection between transformational leadership style and positive indicators such as teacher satisfaction, student achievement, teacher commitment, and school effectiveness (Amitay et al., 2005; Bogler, 2001). Bogler (2001) suggested principal selection should focus on their pedagogical understandings and talents, as well as their interpersonal skills and charisma. Nir and Hameiri (2014) also suggested that principal selection should focus on people who have had prior experience as teachers.

Complicating the issue of principal leadership are the high rates of leadership turnover many districts face. Annual principal turnover rates in school districts throughout the country range from 15% to 30% each year with especially high rates of turnover in schools serving more low-income, minority, and low-achieving students (Fuller et al., 2009). Turnover rates are highest in schools with high numbers of poor, minority, and low-achieving students. These schools are difficult to staff with teachers, further burdening principals and making more academically advanced and wealthy schools more appealing for the principal (Beteille et al., 2012). Principals may use their principal experience in poor or low-achieving schools as necessary steppingstones to better schools.

In a recent study, Beteille et al. (2012) found turnover in principals has a negative impact on student academic performance, lowers teacher retention, and lowers gains made for academic achievement. Principal turnover has the most detrimental effects on high poverty schools, low-achieving schools, and schools with inexperienced teachers. Often, the incoming principals lack leadership skills and have little leadership experience (Beteille et al., 2012). Although there are many ineffective leadership qualities and traits that contribute to a school's low performance, there are also many proven characteristics that have evidence of promise to promote a highly functioning school. These effective strategies include transformational leadership, participatory approaches, shared decision-making, and empowerment. These strategies are further described and reviewed in the next section.

Principals Leadership in Effective Schools

Research has provided a great deal of research showing that the school principal is a key factor in making a school successful, and/or maintaining the school's success (Hord, 1984; Terry, 1988). In 2001, Day et al. (2001) identified school principals who exercised effective leadership and found these successful principals shared a common mission and beliefs about how the school should operate, contributing to a healthy school environment where teachers, staff, and parents came together and collaborated on new strategies and outcomes for the school. The researchers found these effective principals were able to solve problems by applying communication skills and initiating mutually respectful negotiations with school stakeholders and remained intent on problem solving and facilitating personal and professional growth amongst students and staff (Day et al., 2001). The effective principals believed, voiced, and practiced shared values such as respect for others, integrity, fairness, and honesty and promoted a positive school climate where collaboration was common, and staff were bonded emotionally to one another. The authors concluded what led to the success of the school, was the commitment of the staff, and the commitment of the staff depended on the principal leadership, thus illustrating the powerful role of the principal in setting the school climate and promoting success (Day et al., 2001).

For school principals to be effective, they also must be empowered (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Bennis and Nanus (1985) found when school principals are empowered, they believe in their ability to make change and improve the lives of the people within the given organization. With this feeling of empowerment comes excitement and confidence that they are effective leaders who are committed to serving their constituents. This

empowerment becomes mutually reinforcing, as their staff and students also adopt these feelings of competency. Principal empowerment may be thought of as a type of transformational leadership quality, in that the effective principal applies transformational strategies to create change. Participatory involvement between the principal and staff, provides evidence that the principal is empowered, and has the skills to impart this on others (Burns, 1978).

Pellicer et al. (1990) also found evidence for the power of participatory involvement, in that effective principals brought together strong teams who mutually encouraged and empowered each other. Shanahan (1988) found effective principals allowed others to participate in important decision-making tasks and define goals and objectives for the organization. Shared decisions also allowed stakeholders to make important contributions and influence the daily operations of the school (Kellmayer, 1995). This empowerment gave the stakeholders a sense of ownership in their school and a sense of pride in their success (Raywid, 1983; Wehlage, 1983). Furthermore, Tibaaldo (1994) found award-winning principals were objectively democratic and applied participatory leadership more commonly than principals from less established schools which were not recognized as centers of excellence. As such, Tibaaldo suggested transformational leadership is essential for schools to be positive academic centers, where student achievement and positive culture preside. Mestinek's (2000) research found transformational leaders were also creative, independent thinkers, and willing to take risks; all important changes for the school to evolve.

Research has overwhelmingly supported commonalities among school principals who run effective schools. Some of the qualities include empowerment, commitment,

independence, and risk-taking. Together, these qualities bring rise to transformational leadership that transcends past the school and into the community. Transformational leadership is further discussed in the next section, and an overview of relevant literature is provided in-depth.

School Leadership and Parental Involvement

As a central link in the power structure between teachers, parents, and students, principals are essential to how any school functions (Ball, 1987). While this power is circumscribed by many contextual factors, principals possess significant influence in dictating a school's culture and organizational goals. The role requires significant professional agility, with duties simultaneously ranging from managerial, to political, to academic (Cuban, 1988).

Among these duties is cultivating parental engagement. According to Brown and Hunter (1991), school principals are “essential to the success of parental involvement” (p. 26). Principals model effective engagement tactics to other school staff, and more generally take leadership in setting a school-wide tone that such engagement holds value (Ascher, 1998). In doing so, a successful principal is able to solve problems by bringing parents and the school community together (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Principals are complex educational figures because of the multifaceted role they fill in schools as simultaneous administrators, educators, and leaders. In their 2009 article, Clark et al. concluded research into school principals' impact on school performance was lacking precisely because their many roles complicate research and the data analysis. Despite these complexities, researchers have adopted a variety of analytical tools in an attempt to distill the influence of principals for school and student success.

Some studies have attempted to establish a link between a school's performance and their principal's experience (Ballou & Podgursky, 1995) and leadership style (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Other studies have sought to quantify a principal's impact based on a set core of leadership practices they identified (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Louis et al., 2010).

Principals exhibit a variety of leadership styles which inevitably impact the way they interact with parents. According to Ball (1987), principals tend to exhibit four styles of leadership: interpersonal, managerial, adversarial, and authoritarian. Within this framework, interpersonal leaders favor personal interaction and value autonomy in the people they manage with an emphasis on group consensus. Managerial principles are more bureaucratic, with committees, memoranda, and codified procedures. Adversarial and authoritarian styles are similar in a desire for uncontested control, but the adversarial leader is more aggressive and argumentative. In another framework presented by Schmider et al. (1994), they suggested a principal's leadership style may include creativity, enthusiasm, and collaboration. Although no principal will operate exclusively in one style, once one understands their basic leadership style, it is easier to extrapolate a principal's role within their respective school, and in turn how this role affects school/community partnerships (Epstein, 2001, Epstein et al., 2002; Hands, 2005). Recent research highlights the importance of understanding and analyzing a principal's leadership style by linking it with student outcomes (Clark et al., 2009; Louis et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2008; Supovitz et al., 2010).

While researchers have sought to describe principals' leadership styles from the outside, few studies have examined how principals themselves comprehend their leadership role in schools. This is important because, as Gordon and Louis (2009) argued,

“principals’ personal behaviors and attitudes about community and parental influence are strongly related to community and parental involvement in school decision” (p. 21). In Gaziel’s 2003 study of 30 Israeli elementary school principals and their perceptions of their school environment, he categorized four metaphorical perspectives to analyze how principals view their role: structural (organizational goals and efficiency), political (individual or group interests), symbolic (concepts and imagery), and human resource (human needs). Of these perspectives, he found school principals consistently used a human resource frame to navigate their school environment, seeing the organization as a family and their role within this “family” as an empowering figure who aligns organizational and human needs. Principals often use a combination of one or more of these frames to help them make sense of their school environment and to solve problems. This view of “school as family” has implications for a principal’s relationship with school stakeholders. An effective principal will nurture relationships with these stakeholders, including parents, community members, and local people of influence in order to draw resources to the school (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Despite the “school as family” perspective Gaziel (2003) identified—a perspective that foregrounds the importance of parental involvement in student success—other research has found a less committed leadership approach among principals regarding parental engagement. For example, Lloyd-Smith and Baron (2010) found among the 245 surveyed principals in South Dakota, participants conveyed a neutral stance on parental involvement. The authors found though overall principals neither support or deny family involvement and some principals “may view parental involvement as desirable, their actions may not support this belief” (Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010, p.

39). They concluded while principals “may view parental involvement as desirable, their actions may not support this belief” (p. 39).

In further analysis, Lloyd-Smith and Baron (2010) wrote despite a spoken belief in the value of parental engagement for student success, principals in their study were “uncomfortable with parental involvement as it relates to some school decision-making roles” (p. 40). Some principals exhibit leadership styles that actively avoid parental engagement. Hong (2011) described an encounter with one principal who believed “parents are incapable of supporting students” (p. 195), arguing in practice involving parents increases the barriers between school and family. Principals furthermore exhibit resistance to parental involvement when it comes to engaging single and low-income parents. As Ascher (1998) argued, this amounts to a practice wherein school officials pre-judge the potential for parent participation based on socio-economic levels. These cases present a challenge not only of increasing parental engagement, but also working with principals who might balk at the efficacy or desirability of this task (Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010). In addition, the authors discerned from the results that while principals agree family involvement impacts academic achievement and behavior, principals were “uncomfortable with parental involvement as it relates to some school decision-making roles. This creates a unique challenge for administrators to identify parental involvement roles that parents deem meaningful and principals deem acceptable” (Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010, p. 40).

Engagement with Diverse Families

Diverse families face significant barriers to participation in schools which may complicate the essential role principals play in cultivating parental involvement. Parents,

particularly low-income and limited-English-proficient parents, have been found to face multiple barriers to engagement, often lacking access to the social capital and understanding of the school system necessary to take effective action on behalf of their children (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2010). Without attention to training and capacity building of the school stakeholders, partnership efforts can fail (Gill Kressley, 2008). As such, schools and principals need to offer other services for multilingual and new families. Rather than promoting equal partnerships between parents and schools at a systemic level, these initiatives default to one-way communication and random acts of engagement such as poorly attended parent nights.

Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K), Turney and Kao (2009) explored family engagement with attention to race and immigrant status. Turney and Kao (2009) found Black and Latino immigrant parents perceived a greater number of barriers such as inconvenient meeting times, lack of transportation, not feeling welcome at their child's school, problems with safety in getting to school after controlling for demographic variables. The Multicultural Affairs Committee of the National Association of School Psychologists also emphasizes there are numerous cultural factors that may mediate how minority families and students interact with school personnel. Some of these considerations include feeling they have less access to the school, lack trust or fear of the government and school services, and burdens of school success that are culturally bound (Driessen & Smit, 2007).

Shannon and Manica (2014) broadly categorized barriers to engagement of diverse families as “structural,” “attitudinal,” or “cultural.” Of these, the authors argued cultural barriers are the most important—and most difficult—to resolve. In particular,

schools and districts must respond to the expressed and observed needs of their unique communities and not rely on generalizations or preconceptions (De Luigi & Martelli, 2015). Examples of structural barriers include scheduling conflicts, childcare, time constraints, financial burdens, and lack of resources available to parents for solving problems related to school engagement. Attitudinal barriers include parents not included in the planning or review process, and lack of understanding of the larger scale changes to programs that diversity will entail. Cultural barriers include not understanding the language, school structure or system, and having teachers that do not speak their native language. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) offers six guiding principles in engaging diverse families based on their extensive review of family engagement research. These identified effective family engagement practices for school programs include: inviting families to participate in decision-making and goal setting for their child; engaging families in two-way communication; engaging families in ways that are reciprocal and collaborative; providing learning activities for the home and in the community; inviting families to participate in program-level decisions and wider advocacy efforts; and implement a comprehensive program-level system of family engagement (De Luigi & Martelli, 2015).

NAEYC's best practices list reflects the U.S. Department of Education's four C areas for guiding policy and goals for parental involvement in the schools. The four C areas include capabilities, connections, cognition, and confidence. The American Institutes for Research and the Department outline a framework of "dual capacity-building" that establishes process and organizational opportunity conditions for building

these four areas toward effective parental involvement. These conditions target all three barrier types, including structures, attitudes, and cultures.

As demonstrated by the research presented in this literature review, the central leadership role of school principals puts them in a position of influence and power when it comes to structuring the relationship between schools and parents. As Goldring and Hausman (2001) stated, principals occupy a “strategic position” for these ends, with the capacity to build an environment conducive to strengthening—or weakening—the school-parent connection. This demonstrates the need for further research into the role of principals in engaging parents, research that acknowledges the responsibility that principals hold given their relative positions of power in the education system.

Parental Engagement Issues

In this section, I focus on what parental involvement in schools looks like. First, I explore the various and sometimes contested definitions of parental involvement itself. I then explore why parental involvement is important, both as a predictor of student achievement and as a mechanism through which school leaders can engage with students. I include an analysis within an important conversation regarding the obstacles—both interpersonal and structural—parents face. Lastly, I outline Epstein’s Theoretical Model (2001) which describes three spheres of influence on student learning and Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) Transformational leadership theories.

Definition of Parental Involvement

Educational research has used varying definitions of parental involvement, covering everything from engaging in curriculum development and school activities to parent attitudes and at-home learning (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). Some research defined

parental involvement as the teacher's perception of “the positive attitude parents have towards their child's education, teacher, and school” (Webster-Stratton, 1998, p. 1). Other definitions focused more on parent-child interactions, specifically practices which impact a child's academic development (Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy, 2000).

Definitions impact research analysis. Because there is a high variable (one sometimes contested) on understanding what parental involvement entails, it is important to clearly explain what it means for this study in particular. As Goodall and Montgomery (2014) explained for example, utilizing a broad definition of parent involvement is useful because “a broad understanding of parental engagement [can] lay the foundations for schools to offer appropriate support to all parents to support their children” (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011 as cited in Goodall and Montgomery, 2014, p. 402). For the purpose of this study, parental involvement is defined as any meaningful interactive engagement between parents and educators for the benefit of children’s education. This engagement could occur in the school, at the home, or in other spaces where engagement in school activities and parental partnerships occur (i.e., field trips, activities, events, meetings).

Mandated Parental Involvement

Mandated parental involvement is when the school stipulates or requires the parent to attend and contribute to the school in a predetermined way. Becker et al. (1997) found some schools require parents to contribute to the school by making them sign a contract that states how they will participate, the length of involvement, and type of educational activities they will be performing. Ouimette et al. (2006) looked at parental engagement in a school in which parents were required to sign a contract agreeing to commit to upholding the rules and responsibilities of the student, and, as the parents, will

commit to supporting the student by engaging in school events such as conferences and school functions. Viadero (2002) looked at a school program where parents were required to sign a contract agreeing to 90 volunteer hours during the school year. Similarly, Smith et al. (2011) also found parent contracts stipulated volunteer hours from 10-72 hours and were required from each family a year. Regarding the effectiveness of a parent contract, Becker et al. (1997) asked if this type of mandated parental involvement, in which parents are forced to sign contracts abiding by certain rules, are really ways to keep people and children from attending the school who do not meet their expectations or cannot participate in the school in the defined way. The authors suggested the use of mandated parental involvement undermines the multiple ways families contribute to the school, by predefining what valuable contribution is.

Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement

Extensive and long-standing research has shown parents play a major role in their children's academic success (Lopez, 2001). As Kyriakides and Creemers (2008) asserted, this familial role may account for almost half of observed achievement variation among students. Demonstrated impacts include increasing self-esteem, motivation, and learning outcomes for students (Fan & Williams, 2010; Joe & Davis, 2009). As a result, they are less likely to be caught up in the disciplinary process (Frazier, 1997) and less likely to drop out (Belfield & Levin, 2007). Similarly, they are more academically ambitious and likely to pursue higher level programs (Barton, 2003). This evidence holds across differences in student age and background. For example, Price (2002) argued parental involvement in a child's education, even if just during their formative early years, has

positive ramifications in their long-term academic success regardless of other obstacles the child may face.

Furthermore, research also suggests parental involvement may increase confidence among parents themselves by giving parents more direct information about school curriculum and building social bonds (Epstein, 2001; Hill & Taylor, 2004). Hill and Taylor (2004) reported,

Head Start, the nation's largest intervention program for at-risk children, emphasizes the importance of parental involvement as a critical feature of children's early academic development because parental involvement promotes positive academic experiences for children and has positive effects on parents' self-development and parenting skills. (p. 161)

Hill and Taylor (2004) explained family involvement supports student achievement "occurs when families and schools work together to build a consensus about appropriate behavior that can be effectively communicated to the children at both home and school" (p. 162).

While much of the evidence connecting parental involvement and academic achievement is anecdotal, some researchers have aimed to connect the two empirical studies (Topor et al., 2010). For example, Topor et al. (2010) designed an experiment to show this link by designating measurable units to student performance and parental involvement. This study used a sample of 158 seven-year-old participants, their mothers, and their teachers. Data were gathered from the child and mother during two visits to the laboratory and from the child's teacher during one visit to the child's school. The child's IQ, academic achievement, and perceived cognitive competence were assessed by a

trained student clinician during the two laboratory visits, when the child was seven years old. At this time, the mother provided updated demographic information. Teachers completed measures on parent involvement and the child's classroom academic performance. Findings demonstrated increased parent involvement, defined as the teacher's perception of the positive attitude parents have toward their child's education, teacher, and school, was significantly related to increased academic performance, measured by both a standardized achievement test and teacher ratings of the child's classroom academic performance. Further, parent involvement was significantly related to academic performance when IQ was controlled for. The authors found increased parent involvement was significantly related to increased quality of the student-teacher relationship and that increased perceived cognitive competence was related to higher achievement test scores (Topor et al., 2010).

While the connection between parental involvement and student achievement is well-documented, both popular and academic discourse has tended to emphasize parental involvement as the catch-all indicator of student success. According to Lea et al. (2011), the notion of parental engagement is “now so deeply assumed that it is seldom defended in policy statements and research recommendations for improved school outcomes, but is simply asserted as an inarguable and necessary condition of effective schooling” (p. 321). This narrative prioritizes the responsibilities of parents over an analysis of other factors that may mediate the parent-school relationship. Other work cautions researchers to consider factors that may mediate linkages between parental involvement and student achievement (Mattingly et al., 2002). Rather than assuming this relationship to be causal, it is possible, for example, that parents might become more motivated to participate

because their students are successful academically (Fan, 2001). In her more recent works Epstein (2001) went so far as to suggest the idea of parental involvement should be entirely re-framed. In a 2006 book chapter entitled “Moving Forward: Ideas for Research on School, Family, and Community Partnerships,” Epstein and Sheldon (2006) replaced the term “parental involvement” with “school, family and community partnership” in order to suggest an interconnected supportive network and shared responsibility for educational growth. Similarly, Hill and Tyson (2009) wrote “the family represents an important contextual layer of learning and development in children's lives” (p. 30). This is not to dispute the role of parents in their children’s education, and in fact only further serves to emphasize how important it is for school leaders to actively engage student families (Leithwood et al., 2010).

Barriers to Parental Involvement

There is some controversy about the degree of parental involvement necessary to encourage a healthy learning space for children, but there is agreement when it comes to the barriers. These barriers are both interpersonal and structural, with one type of obstacle often compounding the other. Some of the interpersonal barriers can include tensions between parents and children (e.g., when children resist their parents participating in school events) or parents and teachers (e.g., when teachers see parents as more of a burden than a partner). Structural barriers can include language, cultural miscommunication, and accessing the time or money necessary for parents to participate (Becker & Epstein, 1982).

These structural barriers can be observed through documented disparities in parental involvement. As noted by the National Household Education Survey Program of

2016, parent engagement varied along a parents' own educational history. For example, of surveyed parents who had less than a high school diploma, only 54% reported involvement with the school compared to 94% of parents with graduate degrees (NCES, 2017). Another study revealed the persistence of interpersonal barriers. In this case, parents reported feeling their children did not want them involved in the education process during their middle-school years (NCES, 2017). However, when the students themselves were asked anonymously, they responded they wished their parents would become more involved in their education, but only complained because they felt embarrassed to have their parents be seen in the school and/or at school activities and events, including pick-up and drop-off (Bauch & Goldring, 2000).

Parental involvement can also be hindered because of parents' self-consciousness about poverty and their own lack of education. In order to get around this barrier, "school staff need to realize financial differences among parents and to try and get them involved by encouragement," (Jackman, 2013, p. 24). This encouragement can take the form of free parent centers that offer visits from representatives of community agencies, and provide information about job listings, and access to learning games created by teachers for parents which give parents the skills to take a more active role in their children's education (Jackman, 2013). For overworked or low-income parents, budgeting time for academic life while also giving children the space to relax and pursue their own interests can be difficult. However, teachers have reported even small amounts of time spent on home learning by parents can be beneficial to students if the time is used wisely and students whose parents did not take part in home learning activities with them were at an academic disadvantage (Becker & Epstein, 1982). It must be recognized that most parents

were students too at one point and can carry old anxieties from negative experiences they had in school which make them reluctant to participate in their own children's education (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). These parents would remain disconnected from their child's academic experience, especially in large urban schools, without deliberate outreach strategies by the school designed to include them (Trotman, 2001).

Lack of parental involvement can also be linked to time-poverty, that is, parents who are overworked and have jobs with inflexible leave policies that do not allow them the time to be dedicated to their child's education, regardless of their wishes. Single-parent households feel this keenly as school officials often decide *a priori* that "single and low-income working parents cannot be approached or relied upon" (Ascher, 1988, p. 9). These parents are not approached by the school, or given opportunities to participate in their children's classroom, attend meetings, or provide assistance with home learning activities.

Sometimes, though, a lack of parent involvement does not start with the parents or students but occurs because teachers do not trust parents to become involved and do not feel supported by the community. When an adversarial relationship develops between parents and teachers, teachers may feel involving parents in the classroom would be a waste of time and would lead to a breakdown in discipline (Flynn, 2007). Often, this develops because of administrative pressure on teachers to treat parents more as clients than partners.

As LaMagdeleine (2016) emphasized, principals need to actively assert their leadership to mitigate barriers parents face. This is particularly true for schools that exist in marginalized neighborhoods with low social capital. Here, "the principal needs to

actively engage students ... to become increasingly aware of their cultural, social, and symbolic capital and what it takes to improve it” (p. 127). As I stated in the previous section on successful school principals, part of this process involves managing a school more like a family than a business; which is also conducive to success because of the mutual respect between families and teachers. In the next section, I describe Epstein’s (2001) approach which defines six different ways in which parental involvement may be advanced in the school setting.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that informed this study comes from two different theories: Epstein’s Theoretical Model (2001) which describes three spheres of influence on student learning and Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) Transformational leadership theories. These two theories helped to describe a conceptual framework that emphasizes the interconnected layers that impact a student’s learning environment.

Epstein’s Theoretical Underpinnings

Overlapping spheres of influence, a theory developed by Joyce Epstein (2001) involves three interconnected spheres. Epstein et al. (2002) developed overlapping spheres of influence to explain that schools and families share the responsibility for children. When the spheres are separate, there is very little partnership or shared responsibility. Overlapping spheres of the family, the community, and the school revealed shared resources, goals, and responsibilities. The external model shows there are “three major contexts in which students learn and grow—the family, the school, and the community” (Epstein, 2008, p. 10). Epstein (2001) suggested parental involvement in the schools can be unpacked and defined through six different potential mechanisms:

parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Epstein (2001) argued when these six mechanisms are combined, a supportive climate for student learning is fostered. These six components are further defined below.

1. “Parenting” here means skills that allow a child to develop and mature in a safe environment. The school assists the parent to develop these healthy home environments in ways that are age-appropriate throughout their education in each grade level. Schools may offer different training to parents, guardians, and caretakers, as well as adult education classes and/or home visits.
2. “Communicating” refers to reciprocal communication between teachers and parents, guardians, and caretakers regarding everything from educational progress to emotional health. It is the responsibility of the school to design procedures and pathways for school to home communications. These efforts should allow for transparent communication that is bi-directional between the school and home. These communications should be culturally and linguistically appropriate.
3. “Volunteering” brings parents, guardians, and caretakers physically into the classroom, serving as teachers’ aides, administrators, or tutors. It is up to the school to recruit parents and organize volunteering opportunities.
4. “Learning at home” is parents helping their children with homework, or taking them to a relevant museum and cultivating a home-based educational environment. Here, the school may provide parents, guardians, and caretakers with ideas on how they can support their child’s education at home, either

with homework or other types of educational activities and events. Parents should monitor their child's progress in school and talk to their child about how school is being experienced and talk through their child's goals and aspirations for their future.

5. "Decision-making" here means any activity that helps parents, guardians, and caretakers to interact with the school curriculum and school governance, most commonly through PTA/PTO groups. Schools may welcome parental involvement in school governance and welcome parental input in respect to policies and procedures that affect the students, including their own children.
6. "Collaborating with the Community" suggests an interweaving of resources, practices, and ideas from the community into school programming. Schools can integrate different resources from the community into the school in order to promote and expand different programs and services that will enhance student learning and student achievement.

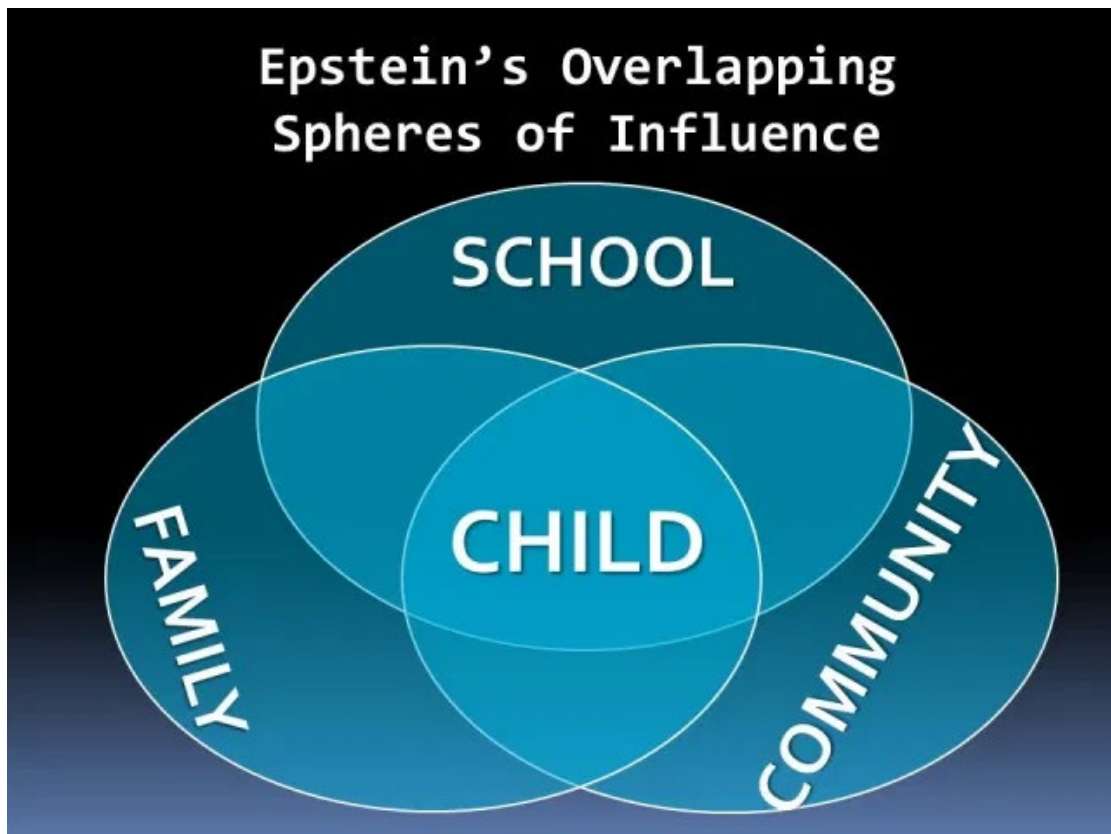
Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory

In 2001, Epstein explained education involves success in three areas: through the family, school, and community that represent three overlapping spheres of influence. As shown in Figure 1, there are three overlapping circles, representing the school, family, and community. In the center, the vortex, is where the student is located, indicating that the school, family, and community all have a role to play in educating the child (Epstein, 2001). This theory is rooted in sociology, psychology, and ecology and recognizes the interdisciplinary nature of education, and the reciprocity between all the actors in the child's education, emphasizing the need for collaboration and interaction. However, this

model does not describe a reciprocal relationship between the principal and the families, thus suggesting a transactional relationship between the two actors.

Figure 1

Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence



Note. An effective education is dependent on three spheres working in dynamic partnership with shared responsibilities.

Epstein's (2001) Overlapping Spheres of Influence was an important theoretical framework for understanding parental involvement in the schools. This theory posits an effective education is dependent on three spheres—school, family, and community—working in dynamic partnership with shared responsibilities (Epstein, 2001; Epstein et al., 2002). She developed this theory in reaction to prevalent educational assumptions at

the time wherein educational theorists suggested an inherent separation between families, school, and community. Rather, Epstein's (2001) Three Spheres of Influence emphasizes "the coordination, cooperation, and complementarity of schools and families in education" (p. 52).

Epstein (2001) argued students' performance is maximized when the three spheres are closely tied with parents, schools (including school leadership), and the wider community working together in a harmonic feedback loop conducive to nurturing learning experiences (Epstein, 2001). This educational network also helps reinforce students' skills and feelings of academic success outside of the school (Epstein, 1995). The community functions by "creat[ing] family-like settings, services, and events that foster strong parent-child-school relationships" (Epstein, 1995, p. 61). School and social systems that facilitate overlapping spheres experience a sense of shared purpose in preparing and supporting students and a mutual respect and sense of responsibility between families and the school. Furthermore, in recognizing the existence of Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence, parents and teachers can foster a relationship based on mutual trust and respect (Adams & Christenson, 2000).

Despite these overlaps, Epstein's (2001) theory recognizes differentiating roles for each sphere in encouraging children's academic development. Furthermore, she acknowledged that inevitably the relationship between these three spheres will shift over time as students mature and become increasingly independent. There are also factors that can drive Epstein's three spheres apart, including differences in education background, language, culture, class, race, gender, or particular interpersonal characteristics (similar to the barriers discussed in the previous section). When these spheres are driven apart it can

create tension and conflict between parents and schools to the detriment of students. In the current study, I applied Epstein's (2001) theory in my analysis and exploration of how principals engage and foster parental involvement in the schools. I researched how school principals can bring these spheres together by fostering interdependent relationships between the school, family, and community to maximize school and ultimately student success. More specifically, when the three spheres are brought together, children are able to reach their highest cognitive and social potential (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Epstein, 1987, 2001).

Epstein (2001) asserted relationships between the family and school need to be explored in order to understand how is ultimately responsible for the academic and social success of the students. For example, some school teachers may believe the separation of home and school is ideal as they are two distinct institutions with different goals, roles, and responsibilities. These teachers may wish to avoid engagement or involvement with the parent and the students' home lives, and ultimately resent or avoid parental involvement and feedback. The underlying assumption here is that school and the home have actors who make independent decisions and are not jointly responsible for the success of the student. Epstein et al. (1982) asserted this perspective emphasizes competition and may lead to conflict between families and schools. In contrast, other teachers may encourage families to support school learning and achievement goals at home. These teachers request families to assist their children at home with school related assignments and activities and facilitate home-school continuity for students. Epstein (2001) confirmed that a joint communication philosophy and orientation emphasizes the coordination, cooperation, and complementarity of the home-to-school environment.

Here, the assumption is schools and families do share responsibilities for student success and are therefore motivated to find common ground and build upon a foundation of mutual trust, and respect (Adams & Christenson, 2000; Mapp, 2003).

In summary, Epstein's (2001) theoretical contribution highlights both her conceptualization of parental involvement in education as an effective social organization tool for schools and that families and schools have an equal role in the education of the child (Catsambis & Garland, 1997). Importantly, the philosophical orientation of teachers is critical to closing the family-school sphere of influence, because teachers guide the stability of the two spheres through their influence on how parents experience the school, which influences parental motivation to be committed to the teacher-parent partnership, given opportunities for such a partnership exist (Epstein, 1987).

In looking at the world-view of Epstein's model, it becomes clear that her view of school-home relations supports the synergy of the two ecological systems closest to the child—school and family—to fight and win the battle against inequality in education. Others believe it is important to have school-family partnerships in effort to promote positive student outcomes as targeted goals at the policy level. However, at the individual level, there may be psychological antecedents that will interfere and interact with structural and relational aspects and impede these strong family and school synergies. In the next section, I discuss transformational leadership theory.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Family involvement and success is also connected to how the principal and school provides leadership. Transformational leadership is a relatively new concept, first emerging as a model for leadership in the last quarter of the 20th century (Spears, 1996).

Transformational leadership theory was first promoted by Burns (1978), who viewed leadership as the motivator of a bi-directional relationship with constituents. For example, instead of being the designated “leader,” defining the vision, purpose, and directionality, this would be codetermined through power-sharing that enlightens leaders and followers to “higher levels of morality and motivation” (Burns, 1978, p. 20). This exchange process dismisses the concept of transactional leadership, where the leader maintains the status quo. As such, transactional leadership proposes transformational leadership is broader than transactional exchanges and involves shifts in the beliefs, the needs, and the values of the constituents (Burns, 1978; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

Since that time, transformational leadership has received significant research attention with several researchers publishing theories of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Berson & Avolio, 2004; Leithwood, 1994; Sergiovanni, 1990). In 1978, Burns defined leadership as a strategy that allows all people to come together to act toward goals that support the values and mission of both the leaders and their followers. Burns (1978) stated transformational leadership “... occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivations and morality” (p. 20). To Burns, transformational leadership reflects people’s desire for purpose and meaning in life and is a form of moral leadership in which people are allowed to achieve their highest potential professionally, socially, and spiritually (Burns, 1978). Burns' early constructs of transformational leadership included charisma, consideration of individual needs, and intellectual stimulation.

In 1985, Bass expanded on Burns' (1978) theory by characterizing a transformation leader as, "... one who motivates us to do more than we originally expected to do" (Bass, 1985, p. 20). Bass explained the importance of leadership here was to bring about awareness of the importance of the organizational goals and propose methods to achieve them, encouraging people to think of the larger group rather than act in their own self-interests. Bass applied Maslow's (1970) hierarchy to support his assertion that it is important for leaders and followers to both become self-directing and self-reinforcing. Bass agreed with Burns three constructs of effective leadership and further refined these three constructs to form a foundation of behavior for transformational leaders: charismatic leadership, individualized consideration, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation. Bennis and Nanus (1985) explained effective leaders brought their followers to a greater level of consciousness toward self-actualization (Maslow, 1970). Moreover, Bennis and Nanus (1985) observed the transformational leaders were trusted by others because they were consistent, followed-through on promises, and illustrated their confidence by their willingness to take risks.

A Transformational Leadership Model

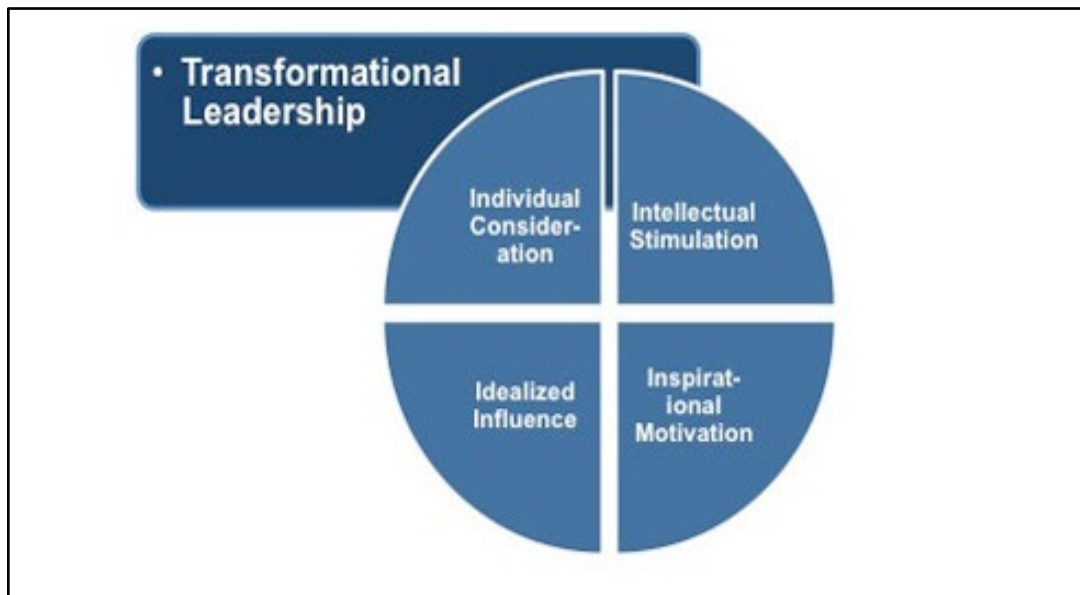
Transformational leadership theory posits there is a particular leadership style which will be most effective for nurturing a successful school system. Grounded in an understanding that principals must play a central role in building a successful school, Burns (1978) first described this theory to describe leaders who motivate and involve followers instead of creating a rigid hierarchy with themselves at the top. Burns postulated such leaders achieve more positive outcomes from the organizations they manage, and "higher levels of morality and motivation" (Burns, 1978, p. 20). Burns

explained the leader should motivate followers to design new and unique ways to challenge assumptions about what is normal and take risks to change the environment. Transformational leaders take efforts to enhance performance by fostering a sense of identity for followers. Transformational leaders design and put forth a collective identity with the organization. As a result, followers take greater ownership and pride in their work as they have fulfilled their needs for self-actualization by adopting a holistic approach that transforms followers into leaders themselves (Sergiovanni, 1990). As described in Maslow's (1970) theory, people seek to realize their potential through self-actualization, esteem, and belonging.

Bass (1985) elaborated on Burns' leadership theory in further developing Burns' theoretical model. He posited leaders motivate others to give extra effort by raising their consciousness about the importance of the results and ways to attain them. Both Burns and Bass agreed successful leadership involved leaders' ability to inspire followers through charisma and ideals and the three constructs form the underpinnings of transformational leadership theory. These three constructs include charisma, consideration of individual needs, and intellectual stimulation (Burns, 1978). The full range of transformational leadership in the modern model includes the following four elements of transformational leadership: (1) individualized consideration; (2) intellectual stimulation; (3) inspirational motivation; and (4) idealized influence (See Figure 2; Bass, 1985).

Figure 2

Bass's Transformational Leadership Model and Theory



Note. This figure describes successful leadership involves leader ability to inspire through three constructs that form the underpinnings of transformational leadership theory

The focus of behaviors falling under the individualized consideration category is on the development of the follower (Bass, 1985). Individualized consideration refers to the degree the leader attends to followers' needs, mentors and coaches' followers, and listens intently to concerns and needs (Judge & Bono, 2000). The leader is empathetic and supportive, keeps communication open and challenges followers. The leader recognizes the need for respect and celebrates the individual contributions each follower makes to the organization. The leader acknowledges the followers have a will, aspirations for self-development, and intrinsic motivation for their work.

Intellectual Stimulation refers to the degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks and asks the followers for feedback and input. Leaders who execute intellectual stimulation encourage followers to be creative and look for new ways to do things. Leaders value and foster a culture of active thinking through intellectual stimulation. This allows followers to become more involved in the organization (Bass, 1985).

Leaders who apply inspirational motivation have the ability to communicate clearly and effectively to followers in order to achieve important organizational goals. Transformational leaders are enthusiastic and optimistic about the future which fosters motivation in the followers. Leaders with inspirational motivation challenge followers by suggesting high standards, communicating optimism about future goals, and ensuring the work is meaningful and fulfilling. Burns (1978) believed followers must have a strong sense of purpose to be motivated to act. As such, purpose and meaning provide the energy that propel the group forward. The visionary aspects of the leader combined with effective communication, make the vision understandable, precise, powerful, and engaging to the followers, who are then willing to invest more effort in their tasks (Dubinsky et al., 1995).

Idealized Influence references leader behaviors that make the leader a role model for followers. Leaders may display and discuss strong ethical principles and value group benefits over individual benefits (Bono & Judge, 2004). Bass (1985) explained the leader's influence is based on whether followers see the leader as a role model they want to emulate. Followers must believe and trust in what the leader is saying, and that the leader places ethical conduct over their own needs.

Recent Research on Transformational Leadership

More recently, Philbin (1997) found transformational leadership results in greater teacher satisfaction and increased leadership and effectiveness. Transformational leaders were found to be highly valued by teachers, who showed a willingness to give extra to the principal and exert their best effort. Floyd (1999) found transformational leadership was positively correlated with a shared school mission. Jackson (1999) agreed transformational leadership encouraged extra effort from teachers, increased the positive attitude teachers had of the principal, and overall brought about a high degree of satisfaction among the faculty. Jackson also found transformational leaders involved others in making organizational decisions.

As discussed, teacher and staff involvement are critical to successful schools, and teacher and staff involvement is heightened by transformational leadership. Also important for transformational leadership is the engagement with the parents. A transformational leader is charismatic and image-conscious, implementing “practices that strengthen school culture, implement effective organizational structures, and build collaborative processes” (Louis et al., 2010, p. 66). Further, a transformational principal does not assume sole leadership of the organization, but encourages teachers to share it (Leithwood et al., 1999), empowering success at all levels of the organization (Vinger & Cilliers, 2006). High functioning schools are often found to have transformational principals who establish a culture of teacher empowerment and involvement (Kurland et al., 2010), involving teachers in decision-making and school leadership. Transformational leadership is an investment in the long-term, putting energy into the growth and satisfaction of colleagues and community partners which “offers a sense of responsibility

and a mutual respect” (Balyer, 2012). This way of leading emphasizes the importance of engaging everyone in the broad education system, creating a positive atmosphere for parental and community involvement (Bass & Riggio, 2005) and setting important organizational goals (Steinmann et al., 2018).

Summary of the Chapter

In summary, this literature review provided a brief history of familial involvement in the schools, including the legislative history and how school principals gained prominence in the educational system. I described how principals and school officials have, over time, viewed family involvement, and how education was mostly reserved for white men until the 20th century. I explained many times principals and society as a whole support the delegation model and are unwilling to seriously consider how parents can be more involved. This has changed somewhat with the advent of PTAs and advisory boards who welcome family input. I discussed how transformational leadership is an important strategy for successful principals to implement, and how transformational leadership contributes to increased parental involvement in the schools.

I then discussed two analytical frameworks presented by Epstein (2001) and Burns (1978) who established there are many more forces affecting student performance than just a student’s work in the classroom. According to Epstein’s (2001) model, student’s must feel supported by their parents, school, and community. Transformational leadership, as developed by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), describes a power-sharing leader who works with the constituents to create change. Taken together, the history of leadership and familial involvement in the educational system, along with important research indicating a strong connection to principal leadership and school success,

highlight the need to better understand the qualities of successful leadership in the schools. In the next section, I describe my methodology in this current study, and my research questions.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes a qualitative case study with grounded theory analysis to understand how public elementary school (K-5) principals may support community and family involvement in the school. The purpose of this study was to understand how familial involvement in public elementary schools can best be realized, and how the principal might inform and advance familial involvement. Through this qualitative research study, I employed a grounded theory case study approach to guide collection and analysis of the data. The ensuing sections of this chapter include an overview of relevant qualitative research designs and grounded theory, the IRB process, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. In this chapter, I orient the reader toward the philosophy, methodology, and analysis processes of case study and grounded theory as explicated by Charmaz (2006) for which the current study was based.

Research Design

The current study is a qualitative case study, employing the grounded theory approach for theory development. The research methodology is appropriate for meeting the purpose of this study, which is to understand the role of the school principal for advancing transformational leadership in order to support and sustain various types of parental involvement (Epstein, 2001) in elementary K-5 public schools. A qualitative design with a case study and grounded theory methodology was applied. The rationale for this methodology is described in the following sections.

Qualitative Research

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research is an intentional activity that focuses on how the researcher is situated in the world. Qualitative research is

interpretive and allows the world to become seen and visible to the researcher, so they may then transform the world through dissemination of the world's elucidation. The qualitative researcher does this by using data tools and methods such as taking notes, conducting interviews, recording and reflecting on conversations, reflecting on photographs, and documenting experiences through memos. The qualitative researcher studies things as they occur and in their natural settings. They attempt to interpret and put the meanings people put on worldly events into action and bring attention to the condition or issue under study. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research begins with one or more of the following: assumptions, a theoretical lens, or a worldview which inquire into the meanings ascribed to a social or human problem. To study the problem, qualitative researchers use a unique type of inquiry, and embark in the collection of data in a natural setting implementing thick descriptions. The researcher is sensitive to the participants under study, and the inductive data process identifies patterns or themes. The end result of this process is a written report or presentation in which the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and interpretation of the problem are identified and discussed.

Creswell (2007) put emphasis on how the qualitative researcher assumes that processes of the phenomena of interest are flowing through a theoretical lens. As such, a framework is provided for the process and the approach to inquiry. Examples include grounded theory and case study research. At a more micro level are the aspects to qualitative research common to all forms of qualitative research. These include: natural settings, assumption that the researcher is a key instrument, the use of multiple sources of

data, inductive data analysis, participant meaning-making, emergent design, a theoretical lens, interpretive inquiry, and a holistic account (Creswell, 2007).

The qualitative researcher uses qualitative approaches because they wish to explore a problem or issue, because there is a need to study a particular group or population, to identify variables that can later be measured, and bring voices to silence. According to Creswell (2007), these are appropriate reasons to embark on qualitative research rather than use literature reviews or rely on results from other research findings. Creswell (2007) explained qualitative research allows the researcher to conduct a robust investigation into a complex phenomenon resulting in a highly detailed and specific understanding of the issue under study. This can only be achieved through direct interaction with people, field work, and hearing and listening to authentic voices, unencumbered by what is expected or what has been read in the literature. As such, qualitative research is an excellent approach when the researcher wishes to develop theories, when inadequate theories exist, or current theories do not adequately capture the complexity of the problem under study (Creswell, 2007).

According to Creswell (2007), “qualitative researchers conduct their studies in the ‘field,’ where the participants live and work - these are important contexts for understanding what the participants are saying” (p. 18). Because the current study employed an inductive approach to theory development, qualitative research methods was most applicable for the study. Also, because I could not experimentally control the participants' actions within the research settings, a controlled experimental design was not possible. Klenke (2008) stated, “The study of leadership is particularly well suited for qualitative analyses because of the multidisciplinary nature of the field which has to be

more open about paradigmatic assumptions” (p. 5). Qualitative research occurs in a natural setting where the researcher is a tool for data collection and research design (Creswell, 2007; Klenke, 2008). I chose to take my study in two methodological directions: case study and grounded theory. The two processes provided a cohesive methodology and are described in the sections that follow.

Case Study Methodology

The case study approach allowed me to focus on a specific group or process (Creswell, 2009). Typically, in a case study, there is a phenomenon that is bounded in some type of context (Miles et al., 2014). The scope for case study research typically involves an in-depth exploration of a phenomena in a real-world context (Creswell, 2012). Importantly, because a case study design employs many types of data sources, a case could include an individual, an organization, small group, or a role (Miles et al., 2014). Case studies are understood best by the phenomena of interest, and not by a particular method. Within this case study, examples show how school stakeholders at one public elementary school believe familial involvement may be advanced with intention and purpose. Principals can be influential in the degree to which families are involved by implementing policy and procedures within school operations. Parent voice in decision-making strengthens parent partnerships, and by asking for input, principals grow parent involvement. In this study, I investigated the relationship between principals and parental involvement using one typical, illustrative case (Creswell 2007).

Grounded Theory Methodology

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), grounded theory research provides data directly taken from participant level report of their lived experiences. In this study, I put

myself directly in the school setting through observations, and inside the mind of school stakeholders. I began with little idea on what others might see as beneficial for familial involvement, and throughout the course of this study, I was able to develop a model to illustrate my findings. This resulted in a theory grounded in qualitative data, such as observations, interviews, and document review. Together, these data sources provided me the information I needed to develop a model for how principals and families may advance familial involvement in the public elementary school setting. I followed the advice of Charmaz (2006) and worked to understand how to elevate human voice and engage in the process of using findings to develop theory. Charmaz' (2006) process involved several related activities, such as gathering data, coding and categorizing, memo-writing, theoretical sampling, and analysis.

Data were analyzed to identify themes that explained the dynamic between families and the principal. By applying grounded theory through means of a case study, I was able to develop a special study that involved participants with connections to a particular school, to generalize to other studies that may use a different setting or approach. The methodology of grounded theory begins through observation of participant behavior and participant interviews and other sources of social data. Charmaz (2009) stated, "Grounded theorists start with data. We construct these data through our observations, interactions, and materials that we gather about the topic or setting" (p. 3). Creswell (2007) substantiated how "in a grounded theory approach, interviewing typically plays a key role in developing the theory" (p. 64); however, other sources of data may be collected as well.

Charmaz (2009) emphasized the importance for the researcher to also understand their thoughts and views throughout the data collection process. Charmaz (2008) stated, “Data are co-constructed by researcher and participants, and colored by the researcher’s perspectives, values, privileges, positions, inter-actions, and geographical locations” (p. 130). Grounded theory is a type of qualitative research in which the researcher examines people and behavior within natural settings that are not controlled nor are a particular issue to be controlled by the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The nature of my research question was suited to grounded theory because it allowed for exploration and theories to emerge versus forcing assumptions. Because leadership is an interesting and well-discussed topic, it may be easy for a researcher to force their own opinions on leadership onto others, thereby influencing the data, and creating researcher bias. The methodical process of grounded theory and its constant comparison-analysis helps prevent perceptions and bias from influencing the data analysis. Because it was my desire to uncover the leadership qualities and behaviors successful principal’s use and adopt to inspire parental involvement, grounded theory was best suited to capture these insights from the perspective of important stakeholders who interact with one another, namely teachers, parents, and of course, the principal.

The Institutional Review Board

The purpose of the Institutional Review Board is to ensure ethical treatment of participants and their personal information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I was required to perform several important activities prior to initiating the study with participants. First, principal approval was necessary to gain access to participant testimony and become a fixture in the school setting. Obtaining the school principal’s approval was relatively

straightforward, as I have a preexisting relationship with the principal and have been an active volunteer. As my children attend this school, upon discussing the research purpose and research questions with the school principal, the school principal provided verbal support. Later, in January 2020, I received a letter of support from the principal, which I submitted with the IRB application. Please find the letter of support, indicating the principal's agreement to allow me access to the school to conduct the study (see Appendix A).

Upon receiving the letter of support, I next sought IRB approval. I obtained official IRB approval in February 2020 (see Appendix B), and immediately began engagement with study participants. First, I scheduled an appointment with the participants to conduct individual interviews. In my initial email to participants to elicit support and permission to interview, I attached the IRB approved consent form (see Appendix C) which described the purpose and expectations of my study. The participants were made aware of four major informed consent points: 1) their participation was voluntary and they could freely choose to stop participating at any point within the study without penalty; 2) there was no anticipated risk, stress, discomfort, compensation or other direct benefits to participate in the study; 3) the procedures and tasks consisted of individual interviews and/or non- participant observation; and 4) the information shared is for research purposes only and will remain strictly confidential.

In order to maintain confidentiality, I did not use participants' names in any of the write-ups and used pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. I kept all the data (interview/ observation) audio, written, or transcribed interviews on a password-encoded computer document. Any printed versions used for analysis were kept in a locked file cabinet.

Importantly, because COVID-19 was declared a pandemic shortly after my study was approved, all interviews prior to IRB approval (i.e., after February 2020) were conducted virtually. All other procedures remained the same.

Selection of Participants

Given the emphasis in qualitative research on non-probability sampling (Creswell, 2002), purposive sampling was used for the current study. Purposive sampling is a qualitative sampling method that deliberately selects participants and sites to understand the research phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2002). I identified the following qualitative data sources: parents, school's principal, school's counselor, and teachers. All data collection events were derived from instances and participants associated with a diverse public (K-5) elementary school in the St. Paul, MN school district from which principal permission and IRB approval to conduct the study were received.

Data Collection

In this study, I chose to triangulate my data by enlisting three techniques including: interviews, observations, and document review (Table 1). Data collection was initiated in Fall 2017, and continued through February 2021.

Table 1*Three Types of Data Collection*

Data Collection Type	Description	Number
Observations	I observed 3 different school's events (Fall Festival, Martin Luther King Day Celebration, African Drumming and Dance featuring Christian Adeti).	3
Interviews	I interviewed the school's principal, four teachers, and four parents and the school counselor.	10
Document review	I reviewed some documents that are related to engaging parents and building a school community such as newsletters, official announcements, emails, meeting minutes etc.	9

Note. This table explains the three types of data collection and the number of each.

Observations

Each observation was conducted at the school during a special event in which parents, teachers, students, and school staff were all present. Observational data were collected with the understanding that “how you collect data affects which phenomena you will see” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 15). Here, I made myself aware of the potential for researcher bias and that I could very easily, and without intention, sway participants toward responding to my questions in a particular way, despite best efforts to standardize the procedure through the use of guidelines. As such, throughout my observations, I maintained as neutral a stance as possible, realizing I would bring my own biases into the observational interpretations.

Before I began my observations, I performed two important activities. First, I visited the school as a parent and interested community member to become acquainted with the school context and atmosphere. For example, to become more comfortable and

understand the parent perspective as a volunteer, as well as become seen at the school so I would not stand out during my observations, I volunteered at several school events, and partook in volunteer activities such as organizing the space, arranging chairs, and welcoming parents. I also stationed myself at the main entrance and distributed flyers. This helped me feel visible to the school body, interact and build rapport with teachers, parents, and students, and be seen as a helpful volunteer rather than having people view me as simply a researcher. This also served to build relationships with parents, teachers, and other members of school leadership so my presence at future events in which I would be formally observing would be welcomed and natural. Initially, the diversity was very surprising to me, as students and parents invited friends and family, and many additional people were there who I do not usually see at the school. I thought it was a great way to introduce diversity to the school and contribute to a good cause.

Second, I developed observation guidelines (see Table 2) for the collection of data during the observational periods. My guidelines consisted of sets of questions and important aspects of the environment, context, and interactions, and behaviors to look for and note during my observations.

Table 2

Observation Guidelines

That what I need to look for:

- Arrival at the event/ observation site
 - a. What was the invitation?
 - b. Were there reserved areas for parking?
 - c. What was the time for parking?
 - d. Were the directions clear on how to arrive at the school/event?
 - e. Observations of the parking lot
 - f. Number of cars, number of people coming and going
 - g. Gait, stance, and mood of people in the parking lot
- Event Characteristics
 - a. Was this a paid event? Did parents have to pay to enter?
 - b. How much did it cost to enter?
 - c. Were parents prepared to pay? Did they make comments about the price?
 - d. How were parents making payment? Did they need credit cards? A money app? Cash?
 - e. Were there problems or benefits to this that were expressed by parents?
- Entering the observational site
 - a. Mood of parents
 - b. Mood of children
 - c. Observations of behaviors and sayings that indicate feeling welcomed/ not welcomed.
 - d. Were people happy to be there? Did they seem anxious, happy, tired?
 - e. Descriptions of emotions.
- First Interaction
 - a. Who was greeting parents and children?
 - b. What were they saying?
 - c. What was their body language?
 - d. Did they engage parents and children in conversation?
 - e. Were the greeters mentally present? Did they make eye contact with parents and children? Did they make conversation? Did they smile?
 - f. How did parents react/ engage with the first people they encountered?
 - g. Did parents seem to know the people that were greeting people? Were parents looking for other parents? Other teachers?
 - h. Where were parents/ children told to go?
- What is the principal's role at this event?
 - a. What was the principal doing?
 - b. Who were they talking to?
 - c. How long did they spend talking to a given person?
 - d. Did they talk to people one-on-one? Groups? What was they dynamic?
 - e. What was the principal's posture when interacting with parents? With Children? With teachers and staff?
 - f. Did the principal make eye contact with others? Did they smile? How

	<p>were people interacting with the principal responding?</p> <p>g. Were they engaged in the conversation?</p> <p>• What is the parents' role at this event?</p> <p>a. What were parents doing?</p> <p>b. Who were they talking to?</p> <p>c. What was their mood and behavioral stance during the event?</p> <p>d. Were parents engaged in the event?</p> <p>e. Did parents interact with their children? With other students? With teachers?</p> <p>f. What were most parents doing while they were there? How did they communicate verbally and non-verbally?</p> <p>g. What was said by parents that implied they were enjoying the event? What was said by parents that indicated unhappiness or criticism?</p> <p>h. Was gossip occurring? What was being said? Who was the target of the gossip?</p> <p>• What is the teachers' role at this event?</p> <p>a. How were teachers engaging with the students? Other parents? The principal?</p> <p>b. Did the teachers seem happy to be there? What was the mood? What were their facial expressions indicating?</p> <p>c. What were teachers doing?</p> <p>d. How were teachers identified? Did parents know who the teachers were? How was this obvious?</p> <p>e. Engagement between teacher and the event in general.</p> <p>f. Attitude and non-verbal behaviors of teachers.</p> <p>g. Who were teachers interacting with? What were they doing? What appeared to be their purpose?</p> <p>• Additional Comments</p> <p>a. What is the temperature of the event?</p> <p>b. What is the ambiance? Are there decorations? Is there children's artwork or pictures featured?</p> <p>c. How is the space configured?</p>
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Note. This table provides the guidelines used in the observations (Alhumam, 2021).

During my observation periods, I remained a neutral participant, casually engaging conversation and unobtrusive engagement of the event while following my observation guidelines. I documented my observations as answers to questions from the guidelines as reflective field notes. I also completed short memos after the observational event had ended. I took careful notes and regularly referred back to my guidelines to ensure I was not missing any important observations and details. I was looking to see

how engaged parents were in the school, how the parents were interacting with the teachers and the principal, and how the principal and teachers were interacting with one another. I was interested in what type of mood or emotion they conveyed, whether they presented a friendly and welcoming vibe, and if their friendliness, if seen, appeared authentic (see observation field notes in Appendix D).

Interviews

Data collection also consisted of interviews, which Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) explained is an interaction that creates “a conversation that has a structure and a purpose” (p. 3) between the researcher and the participant. I conducted semi-structured interviews that included several preset questions along with additional questions to clarify or gain additional information in response to participants’ comments and reactions (Salmons, 2015). I used my research questions to guide the development of the interview questions as well as information from my literature review and observational notes. Interview questions were designed to elicit information for answering the overarching research questions of this study.

Interview data provided important insights into the connections between (a) a principal who prioritizes the importance and implementation of parental involvement in their leadership strategy, (b) the considered cultivation of a supportive and welcoming school environment where parents are encouraged to participate, and (c) improved academic outcomes for students. I created several open-ended questions that allowed participants to share their perspectives (Charmaz, 2014). Participants were invited to share their thoughts in a private setting, where they were assured their thoughts and feelings would not be shared with other school stakeholders and allowed a multitude of

voices to be heard. The interview questions were focused on delving into the themes that emerged and bringing to light the nuances of the participants' responses to the question (see Interview Protocol in Appendix E).

Interview questions were collected from four different audiences:

- Parents
- School Principals
- Teachers
- Non-faculty Staff

All interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes and were recorded with participant approval. Audio files were later professionally transcribed for accuracy. Audio tapes were reviewed to confirm transcription was performed correctly and to promote "closeness" of the transcription data to interpretations, in order to obtain clarity and understanding of participants' subjective realities. Additionally, I took detailed notes during each interview, and jotted down ideas and thoughts as themes emerged in real time, which I later applied to data collection and analysis. Interview transcripts were reviewed and coded for emergent themes.

I began each interview by introducing myself to the participant and providing an overview of the research topic and why it was of interest to me. I invited my participant to ask any questions of their own for clarification and subsequently answered all their questions. I asked each participant to tell me a little about themselves, including their name, where they worked, and what their thoughts and feelings were about the educational environment, and how they felt in the school given their particular role. From here, I began to ask my specific interview questions as appropriate to the participant (i.e.,

teacher, parent, principle, school counselor). To go deeper into exploring the topic, I asked follow-up questions which requested the participant explain their beliefs and ideas. Asking these probing follow-up questions also allowed the participant to reflect on what they had said and clarify their position and offer additional insights. In instances where the interview question had been already answered by the participant in a previous question, I skipped that question to avoid redundancy and maintain the flow and ease of the interview (see Interview Date and Participants Description in Appendix F).

Document Review

In addition to direct personal observations and interviews, I supplemented my data collection with analysis of communication documents the school distributed to parents. Reviewing the documents provided a supplemental source of data for analysis and incorporation into the study. Documents available for review included newsletters, official announcements, emails regarding school events, activities and the need for volunteers, and updates and additions to the events calendar on the school website. I analyzed both formal communication and informal dialogue surrounding events specifically meant to engage parents and build community. Additionally, my data analysis strategy involved consideration of the applicability of Epstein's (2001) Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory to explain and interpret the meaning from my data. This allowed me to broaden my scope of how to interpret and understand parental involvement in the schools using an established evidence-based framework (see Appendix G).

Data Analysis

As a researcher employing grounded theory, the process of data analysis occurred after my data were collected. Utilizing memos, interview transcriptions, and observations and notes from each, I executed three distinct stages of data coding. My memos were written to capture my prominent thoughts and ideas upon each interview, and I summarized the themes that appeared and questions that came from the interviews.

Transcriptions

After each interview, the interviews were professionally transcribed verbatim. Upon receiving the transcriptions, I carefully read through and highlighted important ideas and concepts, taking notes in the margins to capture questions that arose from the data. I then read through each transcription for a second time, comparing and contrasting my questions and the emerging ideas to ensure a match between my first and second readings and I made a list of key quotes that supported the question asked, and provided insight into the participant's thoughts about the question. Careful review of the transcriptions provided the beginning stages of categorization and coding the data.

Memos

In addition to transcribing the data, I applied the use of memos. Memos may take the shape of free-flowing ideas (Charmaz, 2006), or they may be used to help direct the inquiry. Writing memos is a key aspect of grounded theory and provides an opportunity to compare and contrast the data and meaning ascribed to the data. Writing memos for each transcription allowed me to see how the interviews built upon each other and how patterns were reinforced. I wrote memos after reading through each transcription twice and transferred notes from the transcript to the memo. I noted my general feelings and

new ideas and patterns that emerged. I was able to identify and document new questions that arose, that I tracked within the memos.

Many questions arose naturally as I was engaged in the study. I documented these questions in order to ensure I utilized these questions and they were reflected in my coding process. For example, I was curious if there were certain school events that were particularly successful at bringing people together. I also wondered how parents encourage or discourage other parents from becoming involved, and how people from difficult cultures are engaged. I was particularly curious about better understanding if answers to these questions would explain why some people do not volunteer, and why others volunteer even without a clear connection to the school or students.

Reviewing this list, I realized many of these questions were subsets of my interview questions, and they could all be used to help answer my research questions. As such, this list of questions helped me to check my own biases when analyzing the data and be present and focused when thinking about how to attach and assign meaning to the data. My memos were written as a series of notes, and a form of notetaking. I could easily return to the memos and organize my thoughts as needed in order to process key ideas and maintain a list of potential categories and themes. My memos were very important to maintain awareness of the potential for bias and ensure that I kept my personal thoughts and feelings out of the data analysis.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) have described the importance of continually analyzing the data as it is collected and throughout the data collection process. Glaser and Strauss (1967) also emphasized the importance of joint data collection and analysis for effective and valid theory development. As such, I formally analyzed each layer of data

(observations, individual interviews, and document review) to provide insights for each data collection phase. Analyzing each layer of data and using a constant comparison approach, allowed me to explore undeveloped categories or questions that arose in the data (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Coding

Coding is the process of categorizing, summarizing, and accounting for each piece of data so the researcher can understand the experiences of participants (Charmaz, 2006). Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to guide additional data collection. The researcher pays careful attention to coding so generalizable theoretical statements can be made that are sensitive to time and place. There are at least two main phases to coding, including an initial phase where each word, line, or segment of data is inspected, followed by a focused phase that highlights the most significant or frequent initial codes to organize the data. The researcher learns about the phenomenon by studying the data, and the coding guides this learning, and allows the researcher to make sense of the data. We learn through studying our data. According to Charmaz (2006), there are three stages of data analysis that align with grounded theory. These include initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006). Each of these levels of analysis is described in detail below.

Although axial coding is sometimes used in grounded theory, Charmaz (2014) explained axial coding is ineffective for grounded theory as it tries to force a fit. Charmaz (2014) stated, “Those who prefer simple, flexible guidelines—and can tolerate ambiguity—do not need to do axial coding” (p. 148). Instead, Charmaz (2014)

recommended theoretical coding which does not rely on fitting the data to codes as strictly. As a result, the study does not utilize axial coding.

Initial Coding. In initial coding, the grounded theory researcher remains open to any and all possible theories that may arise in the data, which is important for later coding decisions in which the researcher needs to define codes. During the initial coding process, the researcher asks questions of the data, such as, “What is this a study of” (Glaser, 1978), and “What does the data tell me?” In initial coding, the codes are very close to the data and focus on understanding what the data are saying. Codes at this stage are grounded in the data and provisional, because the researcher remains open to additional analytic possibilities and the codes reflect the current best fit. The researcher can then see where data are lacking, and realize where there are gaps or holes, “which is inevitable with emergent methods of data analysis” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 71). The discoveries made allow the researcher to construct an analysis and reflect what is learned and how it is conceptualized. The advantage here is that once data gaps are identified, the researcher can then gather the missing data and go further and deeper into the research and develop categories. In the way that codes are provisional implies that codes may be revised to reflect best fit, which is the degree to which codes capture and condense the categories, capture the phenomenon, and grab the reader. Within initial coding, different strategies such as word-by-word coding and line-by-line coding exist and may be applied by the researcher. Throughout each process, comparative methods are used to connect cross-interview findings.

There are four main guidelines during initial coding: (1) ask the data a specific and consistent set of questions; (2) analyze the data minutely; (3) frequently interrupt the

coding to write a theoretical note; and (4) never assume the analytic relevance of any traditional variable such as age, sex, social class, and so forth until the data show it to be relevant (Berg, 2004). During initial coding, I stayed very close to the data and began to think of codes and how to apply codes to the data and individual lines or segments of information and ideas that emerged. I also was interested in preserving the meaning of data collected and identified common phrases and language used throughout the participant interviews, also referred to as *in vivo* codes (using participants' words or language). This stage of coding enabled me to identify core categories that emerged and considered how these core categories related to each other. I thought through these categories and relationships between the categories to inform the themes and the development of theory. I highlighted key quotes from participants and noted my own observations and referred to my transcribed interviews which I continued to code and wrote down and summarize quotes (see Appendix H as an example).

Line-by-Line Coding. For the current study, I first applied the line-by-line method within the initial coding stage. This allowed me “to form initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied by segmenting information” (Creswell, 2002, p. 411). This also allowed me to identify implicit concerns and analyze explicit statements. To assist with this process, I developed a codebook, so that my line-by-line codes could later assist with refocusing my data (see Table 3). In line-by-line coding, I named each line of my collected data, including lines that did not seem important and were not complete thoughts (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978). I captured the ideas that occurred to me when initially read through the data and developed a general thematic analysis of the data. Line-by-line coding allowed me to remain open to the data and to see

nuances in it, which also helped to identify implicit concerns as well as explicit statements. I kept the following considerations in mind (Charmaz, 2006):

- Breaking the data up into smaller pieces and parts
- Defined actions
- Highlighted assumptions that were made
- Compared the data with each other
- Noted gaps in the data that would facilitate additional data analysis and collection

In my examples of line-by-line coding I was interested in how decision-making was perceived and communicated. I kept the codes active and very close to the data.

Having multiple interviews with people from the same school, allowed me to understand how leadership exerted control in the school setting.

Table 3

Example of Line-by-Line Coding Code Book

Code	Designates	Initial Interpretation
DM	Decision-making	Parent expression of how they want to be considered as important decision makers
GPI	Goal of Parent Involvement	Expression of ultimate desired outcomes
CDM	Challenge in decision-making	Expressed challenges with teachers communications
FW	Feel Welcome	Parents need to feel welcome at school
LR in DM	Leadership Role in Decision-making	Principal suggests leadership style is important to make decisions

Note. This table describes the codes and interpretations of the given code.

Focused Coding. The second stage of coding used to analyze the data was selective or focused coding (Charmaz, 2006). These codes become more selective and conceptual than the codes generated in line-by-line coding (Glaser, 1978). Focused coding allows the researcher to identify the most significant and noteworthy earlier codes to help explain the larger sets of data (Charmaz, 2006). As such, I applied focused coding to my initial codes that appeared most useful to developing a theory.

During my engagement with focused coding, I compared and contrasted my codes across interviews and observations and recoded initial codes using words or phrases that best represented the same meaning or idea when necessary. I spent many hours coding, comparing codes, and recoding which allowed me to compare participants' experiences, actions, and interpretations (Charmaz, 2014). This is one of the strengths of grounded theory, in that it allows the researcher to act upon the data analysis rather than be a passive reader of the data.

I kept the codes active and close to the data, which allowed me to move across observations and interviews to compare experiences and condense the data. For example, a teacher explained that they were lucky to have dedicated parents and detailed how involved they are were. I titled this code, "parent involvement goes over and beyond" to describe parental assistance in some capacity that is beyond what would be expected of a volunteer parent. This code alerted me to other events and actions that support parental involvement strategy at the school. Later, during an interview with a teacher, I had a similar "parent involvement goes over and beyond" coding moment when a teacher described how a parent helped her manage an emergency. At first, the "parent involvement goes over and beyond" code represented parents that helped other students

financially. Later, this code was associated with parental involvement that illustrated extreme commitment and loyalty in many different contexts. As such, through comparing data-to-data, I developed my focused codes, and through the comparison process, I continued to refine them. Because the notion of “parental involvement goes over and beyond” resonates with many experiences, Van den Hoonaard (1997) described these types of codes to be used for other researchers to use as a starting point.

I found the code “outside of the school setting” useful to explore data that pertained to events that happened outside of the school setting but may have important implications for parental involvement. An additional focused code included “parental leadership” in which parents were involved with the planning and execution of the school sponsored event. The focused code, “all encompassing,” referred to all visitors being invited to the school sponsored event and welcomed, regardless of whether they attended the school or not. A final example of focused coding includes the code, “relational difficulties” where for different reasons, there may be barriers for parental involvement. As described in this section and punctuated with examples, focused coding is developed through comparing data-to-data, and is the second stage of the coding process, following initial coding. The final stage of coding, as described by Charmaz (2006), is theoretical coding. My theoretical coding strategy is described in the following section.

Theoretical Coding. According to Glaser’s (1978) approach to grounded theory, the theoretical analysis phase involves integrating categories into theoretical concepts through comparison and analytical memo writing. Glaser explained these theoretical codes weave the story together, and as such are integrative and provide for an analytic

story that has coherence. As such, theoretical coding moves the story in a theoretical direction. To achieve this integration, Glaser explained researchers have to inspect, choose, and then organize and conceptualize their own codes and categories with each other to develop a coherent grounded theory (see Glaser, 1978, 1998, 2005).

According to Charmaz (2006, 2014), the initial and focused coding stages generate codes and categories through constant comparisons of data, data and codes, and codes and codes. However, in theoretical coding, theoretical codes consist of ideas and perspectives that serve as analytic tools and lenses from outside, from a range of theories that could be found in pre-existing theories. Theoretical codes provide coherence for telling an analytic story (Charmaz, 2006). Glaser (1998) explained the benefit to theoretical coding is it allows the researcher to be sensitive to the codes and how they are used. Glaser (2005) continued that the more theoretical codes the researcher learns, the more complex and nuanced their theory becomes, and the better grounded in the data the theory that emerges presents.

Glaser (2005) was exacting in his caution that researchers use more than one theoretical code or show bias for preferring a theoretical code onto the analysis as what he describes as a “pet code.” Glaser explained a series and combination of codes is most likely to capture the relationships between categories and is used when relating and organizing categories into a grounded theory. Glaser (1978) argued theoretical codes must be robustly scrutinized by the researcher with careful and constant comparisons between theoretical codes, data, empirically generated codes and categories, and memos. Notably, abduction supplies the main underlying logic in theoretical coding. Hence, theoretical coding is about abduction, not deduction. According to Atkinson et al. (2003),

abduction is a way of capturing both observations and ideas. Thornberg (2012) used the example of the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes, to explain abductive reasoning. Sherlock Holmes was constantly moving back and forth between data, developing knowledge or theories, and making comparisons and interpretations to find the most robust explanation. As described, theoretical coding is the process by which the categories created during focused coding are linked back together and the relationship is constructed to enhance and ensure the accuracy of these connections (Charmaz, 2014). Taking from the example of Glaser (1978), I organized and categorized my codes into a series of “coding families.” I linked the theoretical codes to theories from my literature review (See Table 4).

Table 4

Example of Coding Families

Coding Families	Theoretical Code	Link to Theory
School	Teacher involvement, student learning, classroom practices, parent volunteers, principal leadership/presence, safety, student voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformational Leadership
Family	Home learning, parent communication with student, homework, communication from school, family lifestyle and culture, family values, parental love and concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epstein’s Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory
Community	Societal norms, welcoming and belonging, community space, safe spaces, enjoyment and relaxation, coming together	

Note. This table describes the coding families, the theoretical codes, and links to theory.

Researcher Role and Bias

It was very important for me to be aware of my potential biases in conducting this research because my personal connection to this topic makes me close to the topic. I spoke to parents who had an excellent principal, and yet their student was still struggling, which helped me understand the principal does not hold all the responsibility for creating a successful academic experience for all students. I also became familiar with how the financial status and funding streams of a school dictate what a principal can or cannot do in order to separate my bias that the principal is solely responsible for all school related happenings. I made concerted efforts to disprove my assumptions prior to the observation. I noted I would spend as much time observing the principal as I would the teachers. I would view all behaviors as equally salient and relevant to parental involvement. I would be as open-minded to the experience and to learn concepts as possible.

To study the problem, qualitative researchers use a unique type of inquiry, and embark in the collection of data in a natural setting. The researcher is sensitive to the participants under study, and the inductive data process identifies patterns or themes. I wrote my thoughts and observations down in my memos, and I challenged myself to look for bias in my notes by comparing my observations with my incoming beliefs. This helped me bracket my biases and assumptions and organize the ideas that emerged in a broad way to avoid locking myself into a particular way of thinking about my data.

In my role as a researcher, I organized interviews with participants, and attended and observed school events in which I was also a participant. In both contexts, I noted the importance of the researcher to be both reflexive and interactive, as the researcher is

variable themselves and becomes deeply embedded in the research process (Charmaz, 2009). As such, I was located directly within the research process (Charmaz, 2008). As both an observer and participant, I participated in the school events as necessary, and engaged with others, while at the same time being mindful of my stance to collect data and allowed the group to be aware of my role as both a researcher and participant.

Triangulation and Validity

In this study, data were recorded, analyzed, and interpreted in a manner which ensured validity and credibility. Merriam (2002) suggested the use of “triangulation, peer examination, investigator’s position, and the audit trail” to ensure “consistency and dependability or reliability” (p. 27). Triangulation is an approach I used in order to increase the validity of my findings, in which I deliberately sought evidence from a wide range of sources and compared findings from the different sources (Patton & Cochran, 2002). As such, triangulation required me to perform a cross-checking of data from different dimensions to augment the trustworthiness of this study (Toma, 2006; Yin 2003).

Multiple data sources and types were used to ensure triangulation such as interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell, 2007). This helped me to bring together different sources of information to converge ideas. With the convergence of this information, I made an argument where the interpretation was more credible (Patton, 2002). The interviews consisted of open-ended questions. Observations were analyzed, and documents examined to understand and put context to the interviews (Tamim & Grant, 2013). I also used validation strategies suggested by Creswell (2007). These include clarifying researcher bias by reflecting on past experiences, biases, and

orientations that could impact how I interpreted the research. As LeCompte and Goetz (1982) suggested, I worked to avoid threats to internal validity “history and maturation, observer effects, selection and regression, mortality, spurious conclusions” (p. 44) and external validity (i.e., “effects that obstruct or reduce a study’s comparability or translatability,” Creswell, 2007, p. 245). As Whittemore et al. (2001) proposed, I applied their four primary criteria. These include, “credibility (Are the results accurate?); authenticity (Are all voices heard?); criticality (Is there a critique to all aspects of the research?); and integrity (Is the researcher self-critical?)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 248) to achieve these goals. In addition, I used validation strategies suggested by Creswell (2007) specifically taking measures to avoid researcher bias by commenting on past experiences that likely shaped how I approached and interpreted the research. As such, I positioned myself as an objective researcher open to new interpretations, new ideas, and interested and encouraging of all participants to share their experiences and tell their stories as they live them, and interpret them through the eyes of the participants.

Ethical Considerations

The consideration of ethics was important in this study. I ensured all my participants and practices were done with respect, which consisted of thoughtful review of my interviews, observations, and document review.

Participants

The role and value of participants was upheld to the strictest standards. I made sure to protect their confidentiality from transcription to publication. I allowed my participants to share their personal stories about familial involvement and used their stories to connect to the knowledge in this area. Everyone signed informed consent forms

which detailed the process and rationale for the research. I used pseudonyms and collected documentation in password-protected sites with recordings and transcripts saved on OneDrive. Upon completion of the study and final approval, all materials will be destroyed.

Practices

To value the ethical practices in research, I used forms and procedures that ensured a consistent approach to observations, interviews, and analysis for each case study. To achieve consistent measures of data collection, I allowed the participants to discuss in their interviews the topics most meaningful to them. Use of this model and these techniques allowed me to balance data collection with participant freedom.

Summary of Methodology

In this chapter, I presented my methodology for understanding how principal leadership guides parental and community involvement through the application of a grounded theory case study to explore how principals may advance familial involvement in public elementary schools. I described my rationale for employing this type of study for evaluating my qualitative data, and explained the use of semi-structured interviews, observations, and document review to collect my data. I then analyzed my data through the several phases of coding, including the initial, focused, and theoretical coding as recommended by Charmaz (2006). I also explained the IRB process, how my participants were selected, and the setting where I conducted my research. My efforts intended to maintain an ethical and trustworthy study and employ considerations to contribute to the research base of familial involvement in public elementary schools. In the next chapter, I

present my findings for this qualitative research study used to understand familial involvement.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the findings from this qualitative grounded theory case to define parental engagement in public elementary schools. The purpose of this study was to understand how school principals can advance and sustain various types of parental and community involvement in the school (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Epstein, 2001). My data consisted of three observations of school events (Fall Festival, Martin Luther King Day Celebration, African Drumming and Dance Featuring Christian Adeti), 10 interviews (four teachers, one school principal, four parents, and one guidance counselor). I also reviewed nine school's documents and the school website. An analysis of this grounded theory case study, which involved initial, focused, and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006) revealed four major themes that explained how a transformational principal advances parental involvement. This included: Leadership, allowing for shared decision-making, honoring parent values, culture, and language, and tailored interventions for parental involvement. See Table 5 for a delineation of the themes.

Table 5*Themes that Emerged from the Data*

Theme	Subtheme	Data Collected
Leadership	Welcoming environment Communication Inviting parents to the table Trust	Interviews Observations Documents review
Decision-making	Organizational goals Sharing roles	Interviews Observations Documents review
Honoring Parent Values, Culture, and Language	Community engagement Supporting the home learning environment	Interviews Observations Documents review
Tailored Interventions	Innovative volunteering Addressing barriers for participation	Interviews Observations Documents review

Note. This table describes the themes that emerged from the data and the data that was collected.

Leadership

To support the importance of transformational leadership on parental involvement, leadership emerged as a major theme. As Parent Mrs. H. A. shared, “It is important for principals to empower parents as leaders and teachers of their children. Principals provide a model for how to be involved.” Similarly, Mrs. H. U. 4th grade teacher said, “Our principal believes that parental involvement is very fundamental in education because this way can help school and students to be successful and have a positive experience in the learning process.” Encompassing all principal behaviors, parents described the role of the principal as one of a leader; and the principal was also

effective at empowering families to be leaders. The principal, Mrs. Q., explained the goal of school events was not only to raise money but also to encourage communication between parents. She explained, “We bring people together to meet each other, and have conversations, and the purpose was not to raise money.”

In addition, the principal sets expectations for the teachers to work together as a team. As described by second grade teacher Mr. J:

My team works pretty closely together in terms of doing the same thing on our team in terms of curriculum and having the same or some very similar expectations of how the students are conducting themselves. I'm fortunate to be on a team where we can kind of work together and help each other out. I think from a principal's point of view this is efficient.

In addition to teacher and parent input into the role of transformational leadership in parental involvement, the school's principal, principal Mrs. Q. shared, “For me I guess the basic definition is that parents are involved when the decisions are made about individual children, about events at the school, about program decisions, that parents are considered partners with us, and what we do.”

Regarding communication, school counselor Mrs. B. explained how communication is ideally presented, “Good communication between the parent and teacher means that both the parent and the teacher share responsibility with communication. that is good parent involvement, attending conferences.” Part of being a leader, requires the principal to set expectations. Mr. J explained the principal has high expectations for family involvement, “The principal expects every classroom teacher to send a letter at least twice a week telling the families what is coming up this week and

what to expect, how to help.” The participant indicated a successful leader creates opportunities for involvement. Such opportunities were described by second grade teacher Mr. J.:

It’s not like the volunteer would show up and hang around because that wouldn’t be useful and it would get annoying and there have been in the past. I’m sorry, some parents who would just kind of hang around, like in the morning, and they’d hang around and have coffee and kind of talk and stuff. The principal got away from that happening, informally by having a Thursday morning coffee with the principal. So instead of somebody feeling like I’m just gonna hang around he created a specific time so it wasn’t distracting.

Mr. J. also explained how consistency is important for gaining familial involvement, and that a successful leader creates a constant schedule so families do not get confused:

I know people have trouble when they change their routine a number of times because everybody doesn’t listen and everybody doesn’t get every email they may not know it, so I guess kind of setting a plan and sticking with it kind of seems to work.

Mr. Y., an English language learner teacher who is from Somalia, explained the principal is very good at integrating and adapting her leadership style and techniques to fit cultural needs and experiences of the students and other teachers, “The principal and the teacher talk about the goal of the school, how to work with parents from different cultures.” Mr. Y. also explained the principal is excellent at leading the conferences and ensuring diversity at the conferences, “The principal makes sure that all parents understand, and that limited English is never an issue for engagement at conferences.”

Welcoming Environment

This subtheme was realized through my interviews with my participants, my observation, and the review documents, which described their comments on the importance of being and feeling welcome in the school. This led the groundwork for my subsequent themes and understanding the coded data. The interviews led me to realize two important key aspects of the learning environment: a) parent cannot consider being involved in the school if they do not feel welcome in the school, and b) teachers who maintain communication with the parent are more likely to have parents who feel welcome and incentivized to be involved. As third grade teacher Mrs. W. pointed out, “I like it when the parents feel like that they are always welcome because some people don't have the schedule where they can come once a week for an hour or something, and so if they have some time I want them to feel welcome.”

Parent Mrs. S. explained how valuable a welcoming school environment is as she described her first visit to the school and the impressions she formed regarding the welcoming aspect, she said:

We had a tour of our local school. They did not have funding for the music and art. Also, we felt that the principal who gave the tour was really distracted because there was a discipline issue that she had to address. However, when we toured [at this new school] with the principal. She seemed calm and warm really genuinely loved and cared for the school.

There were some challenges that prevented a welcoming environment. For example, third grade teacher Mrs. W. said, “places where the events were too formal, then people didn't

come or they would leave early.” The school counselor Mrs. B. explained a welcoming environment implies parents are able to communicate honestly about their needs,

Perhaps or you have to be part of a council, those are opportunities to share, decision-making, but it doesn't always fit a family schedule for example if you work a night shift, then that would not be a realistic expectation.

I found the quality of the teacher-parent relationship was very important to feeling welcome by the parent. As parent Mrs. H.A. said, “For me to feel welcome at the school, I prefer to communicate with the teacher more and help her know more about my child.”

Third grade teacher Mrs. W. explained her feelings about fostering a welcoming classroom environment,

I also want to make it like where the parents can feel like they can come and do what they can. Like, we had the moving going on in my school, and there were parents who just came and helped for half an hour, and I appreciate that.

In addition to feeling welcome by the teacher, parents also appreciated feeling welcomed by the principal. As parent Mrs. E. said, “I do feel really welcome in my kid's school though, I feel like the principal spends a lot of time getting to know kids by their first name at a very big school.” A principal Mrs. Q. remarked, “If you have a question for the teacher, we want you to come and ask us, or call us. So, that's one, it's to bring people into the building, physically.”

Communication

Parents reported they felt most welcome in their children's school, when they were communicating regularly with school personnel. The principal Mrs. Q. explained she makes sure to communicate to parents that communication is valuable. She said:

[The first thing I communicate to parents is] you are important. As I'm talking to a parent, 'Whatever is on your mind is important to me, I work for you, and not the other way around. [Many times what] happens is a parent will come to me, and say, "I really didn't like this, this is what happened." I feel like my role is the mediator to help that relationship get mended so that the two of them can be in partnership together.

As an example of effective communication, parent Mrs. H.A. said, "The school shows they value communication and hearing from parents. They will send out surveys at times to encourage parents to write their feedback and suggestions about anything to improve student learning and development." School counselor Mrs. B. emphasized solving issues about communication with the family is very important in supporting students' learning environment. She said, "I would have hoped the parent could feel like they would come to conferences, very essential to be at conferences to be in communication with their teacher when they have specific concerns for their child."

Observations at the elementary school for the Fall Festival indicated the principal was focused on communicating with attendees. For example, the principal stood at the doorway, personally greeting each person as they entered the building. Several times, the principal would go up to a parent or child and excitedly ask them if they were having fun. She herself presented with a lot of energy. She had a smile on her face the entire time, and she moved through the crowd with ease, maintaining eye contact. During my observation of African Drumming and Dance event, the principal was welcoming, but in a more subdued way. She sat in the back, paying close attention to all that was happening, but purposely staying out of the spotlight, blending in with the rest of the

crowd with her t-shirt and jeans. When it came time for the audience to engage in the dance, the principal jumped right in, showing support and fostering a sense of belonging as she invited people to dance with her.

Inviting Parents to the Table

Two of my participants indicated they felt welcome when they were included in important communications and invited to participate in events that represent organizational goals and values. For example, principal Mrs. Q. shared, “For me I guess the basic definition is that parents are involved when the decisions are made and considered partners with us.” Regarding communication, school counselor Mrs. B. explained how communication is ideally presented, “Good communication between the parent and teacher means that both the parent and the teacher share responsibility with communication.” It is also important to bring parents to the table in a way that is respectful of their time. For example, in a letter to the parents via email, the principal communicated the agenda for the next community meeting and invited all parents to attend.

To successfully invite parents to the table, teachers and staff should work together to find a good approach that will encourage the parents to become involved and stay involved. Also, school counselor Mrs. B. shared a range of strategies for bringing parents to the table and her role in doing so, as well as challenges she faces.

I am in direct contact with families and try to [invite them to the table to discuss the issue] If the family is you know interested in sharing, then that is a big part of my role, I support the students.

As Mr. Y. explained, it is critical to bring parents to the conferences and that is an important way to ensure they become involved in the school.

I tell the Somalian parents that if they want to know about their child and what is happening at the school, they have to come to the conferences. I have to really explain that, and emphasize how important it is. I will call the parents and tell them, even the day before the conference, how important it is for them to come.

My interviews, observations, and document review revealed effective communication is very important for bringing people to the table. The principal, Mrs. Q. broke barriers and extended herself by paying personal attention and time to families to show how much their participation was wanted and valued. The principal noted to parents that she realized they were busy, but she appreciated them taking the time to come to the school and share in the festivities. Mrs. Q. explained how she engaged Somalian families in school events, “I called a few Somali families that I know, and said, “Hey, I think this is really going to be great. Why don't you come? We'd really like to have you here.” As written in the meeting minutes that were published on the school website (see Appendix I) as an example the principle indicates the results of a survey that parents were asked to complete and describes how the results will be used to benefit the school.

Trust

Participants shared that in order to foster a welcoming environment, it is important for the parents trust the school personnel. As the principal, Mrs. Q. said, “the school is a place to build trust among stakeholders.” For example, when children tell their parents a story about the school that contradicts the image the school presents in one way or another, it creates distrust from the parent, and makes the parent think the school may

be trying to hide something or not being completely truthful. As a third grade teacher, Mrs. W. said, “It's actually interesting that one school where my son went, they started saying parents couldn't come in with the children. I didn't trust that.” Participants in this study indicated when there is mutual trust between the school principal and the family, they build a good relationship and are able to have open and honest conversations about their fears without referring to the teachers themselves. Parent Mrs. S. said,

That's exactly why I wanted the school principal to see my email to my son's teacher ... I trust, school principal. More than the teacher. The principal is special and she doesn't make you feel like she's too busy to address my needs as a parent.

Observations from the Fall Festival revealed trust among families. I observed significant diversity of attendees, with different ethnicities, ages, and community members at the event and supporting the cause by buying tickets, food, and playing games. The principal was excellent at developing trusting relationships between and within families at the event. Mr. Y. said encouragement will help build trust, “The principal makes sure the Somalin community is engaged and encourages parents to come to events.”

Decision-Making

The decision-making theme underscores the importance the teachers and parents placed on being part of the decision-making process, and the value of the principal for seeking and incorporating their feedback. As the principal is the final decision maker, parents and teachers felt most positive and heard when the principal ensured parents and teachers were equally important and respected, regardless of who formally submitted the decision. When the principal engages parents in decision-making processes, the principal shows a willingness to share power. This type of decision-making creates a balanced

partnership and brings positive changes. In this study, I found with careful planning, the principal could successfully invite parents and teachers to provide feedback and guide the students' learning experience. Data from participants' interviews highlighted valuing the parents' opinions is of utmost importance in order for parents to feel comfortable and trust they are considered important decision makers. As the school principal Mrs. Q. said, "I'm much more comfortable [making decisions] when I'm with a team of people. It is a gift to me when parents share what is on their mind." Also, second grade teacher Mr. J. remarked, "There is a Site council which is kind of a decision-making body with input from community members and they help with fundraising." He said:

We don't qualify for some funding things. So for us to have certain things like Wolf bridge or art instruction. And as far as the organization of that type of stuff, that would be much more something that our principal would know about, You know, much more of the administrative kind of thing.

Organizational Goals

In the data, I found one aspect to guiding successful decision-making was the realization that everyone had the same common goal, which was to create and foster an environment in which children could excel personally, socially, emotionally, and academically. These shared values support the organizational goals of the school, unite decision makers, and allow for power sharing between the educators and families. I found the school principal was working to include parents in school governance and welcome parental input in policy development related to issues that affect children at a specific school, including their own children. It is important that there is a leader who is in charge to make sure organizational goals are met and seek advice and feedback from all

stakeholders. As a third grade teacher, Mrs. W. said, “Right now we are making a budget decision at our school, and the principal says, ‘I’m going to listen to parents, I’m going to listen to teachers, I’m going to look at how the things are being successful.’” Observations from MLK Celebration included noting the principal and families were together advancing and supporting organizational goals. All attendees were very intent on listening to the speaker and seeking meaning about social justice and learning more about racism. The principal, Mrs. Q., explained shared goals were very important for her to understand if her families were connecting with the school. She said:

I guess I don't want to be the one walking around telling people what we have to fix, and then making them fix it. I want people to be reflecting on our organization, looking at what are our strengths, looking at where we need to be better, and then thinking about ideas and solutions for how we can be better.

Through document review, I found, in an email sent to families, the value and importance of communication and technology was shared between the school and the parents. The school has the goal to increase the use of technology and allow opportunities for the students to learn and utilize technology, a goal the school shared with the parents. To encourage and foster this shared goal relating to technology use, the school provided the opportunity for parents to become more skilled and adept at technology use and offered training for technology use (see Appendix I).

Sharing Roles

The school gives parents the authority in contributing toward finding a way to support the school funds and community engagement. The participants in this study indicated parents worked hard to organize different events that were fun for students,

parents, and the community. At the same time, the main goal of these events was to contribute to funding the school. For example, during my observation of the Fall Festival, parents played an important role and were responsible for the entire event, from the beginning to the end. Parents took ownership of the event. I observed parents take charge and make decisions, direct attendees, and provide advice and support the event. It was clear the parents were in control and were the project managers for the event. The principal clearly allowed the parents to take ownership of the event, and the families thrived with carrying out the tasks and demands expected of them. In my observation of the Fall Festival, I realized parents were very involved in the planning of the event. The principal, Mrs. Q, explained how deeply parents were involved,

The parents were involved in the Fall Festival. The parent committee made some basic plans and put them in place for what they wanted to have happening in the gym, in the cafeteria, in the classrooms. They get a permit for the building use, I'm not really involved in any of that, and then they have told me what they want me to do during the event.

In the interviews, parents highlighted how their point of view is very important, as they promote the school's reputation as outstanding. Everyone enjoys participating in this event. Fundraising efforts supported many projects that were provided and detailed on the school website. For example, Mrs. S. shared:

Those events where parents fundraise really helped the school. There's a big chunk of money that comes from those events. I was so impressed with the Fall Festival to see a father volunteering, knowing that he has a full-time job.

In this way, the parents ensure a successful educational level for their children.

The principal is happy to share decision-making roles with the parents and allow the parents to be in charge of making executive decisions on how certain events are managed. As principal Mrs. Q. shared, “We did do two speaker nights this year ... it was really parent-led.” In addition, review of the data suggested people believe the community shares the responsibility to provide for and support the school, and that a principal is successful if they are capable of bringing in stakeholder buy-in and recruiting funders to support the school. As the principal Mrs. Q explained:

We have the school community foundation, who does fundraising and then provides us with grants every year. The neighborhood really feels like the school is an important part of our neighborhood, and so they want to make sure that it's healthy, they want to keep it strong. Even if they don't have kids with us.

Honoring Parent Values, Culture, and Language

In this theme, data showed parents appreciate the principal’s decisions and leadership in regard to respecting their values, culture, and language needs, in order to best communicate with the school and their children. This is particularly important when the students are not in the parents' care. For example, in a parent interview, Parent H.A. described how the school made sure she and her husband felt safe and secure when their son was away on a five-day camping trip and they were not there to support him. Parent Mrs. H.A. said:

My son was excited about going camping, but he was also scared about being away from home and being away from his parents. The school principal made sure that we were able to communicate with him daily and check in on him, even though he was in an area that was remote, and this created additional stress and

work for the staff and for the principal. This made us very relieved and happy, and our son ultimately had a wonderful time on the trip.

The Participants in this study described the importance and value in honoring and respecting the culture and values of those who attend the school and their families. To support culture and values, the principal requested volunteers with language diversity to talk about the school to prospective parents. The principal was intentional about ensuring prospective parents knew the school was capable and willing to adapt programming to meet parents language needs. Document review revealed an email from the school principal to families, in which she requested multi-lingual volunteers indicating the principal welcomed diversity in parent representation (see Appendix I as an example). Mr. Y explained how the principal integrates Somalian culture into her work at the school and embeds a diverse community voice, “The principal understands the Somalian community and will work with them to make sure their needs are met.” In addition, the school counselor Mrs. B. said, “Last year when we had the event using the voice of different cultures.” A specific example provided by parent Mrs. S. explained how the principal did a great job to honor parent values and culture:

I've emailed the school principal two or three times and she is very responsive.

My son was feeling sad because nobody knew it was Hanukkah and the kids were all starting to talk about Christmas a lot. And so I asked his teacher. I asked the school principal in an email, ‘can we acknowledge Chanukah, and maybe give my son a chance to share about it. he's feeling out of left out’ The school principal and teacher allowed for this.

In another correspondence, the principal made sure to let parents know there would be interpreters at the annual budget meeting, communicating the importance of all voices and language access. In this way, the principal was showing they wanted to make sure that all parents would be able to attend, and that when they were at the event, they would feel welcome and be able to participate. As Parent Mr. X. said, “So in a way, we can temporarily fill gaps by using diversity.” This allowed the parents to have their voices and thoughts shared and heard, and in doing so broke the barriers of silence created by language and culture. In an email distributed to parents, a note about language access was included (see Appendix I as an example).

Community Engagement

The participants in this study showed a clear majority of respondents appreciated and valued events that allowed the entire community to come together. These events were not just important to parents, but were also of interest to a large audience. In this way, these events invited community members who did not have children at the school to come to the school, participate in the events, and contribute to the school through purchasing food, tickets, and other items. Observations of the Fall Festival found the former students of the school also attended, eager to see the principal, indicating a close bond. Other members of the community, who did not have children there but lived close by, came to support the school, talking with the principal, asking about the school updates, and asking the principal how they were doing. All these gestures were reciprocated by the principal, with the principal asking others about their lives and how they were doing. As such, the principal was successful in bringing the community to the

school to help support the school and the school efforts both socially and financially. In an interview, parent Mrs. S. pointed out:

Bringing the community to the school during events is amazing. It's incredible.

And really special. And to have a community where even some of the neighbors and grandparents that don't have kids in the school come to help the school. It helps parents and the community feel they are part of the school when the school principal knows your name and knows who you are and knows your kids names that's like a real important moment.

Document review provided insight through the school website. In one correspondence, the intent to include all people was clear. As written in the meeting minutes published on the school website asking people with a specific skill and interest in plants to attend and volunteer (See Appendix I as an example). The role of the community in fostering and supporting the principal and ultimately school success was underscored by recipients.

Also, Principal Mrs. Q. explained during her interview how she maintains engagement with community members who are interested in the well-being of the school and how she takes advantage and fosters this interest. She said:

People whose kids are grown, or who have never had kids before are still concerned about the health of our school. So, they want to know what's going on, they like to read the school news in the local paper. Many of them will stop and volunteer. We have quite a people, mostly who are retired, who volunteer in this school as tutors. Probably 10 or 15 people that come once a week to volunteer who are retired. They may be grandparents of some students, or maybe not.

Notably, a principal that realizes their own limitations and adjusts the need for perfection to set feasible goals and move efforts toward community empowerment is more successful at gaining leadership buy-in. For example, the principal Mrs. Q. explained her role in empowering people to be their own agents of change, “I want people to be reflecting on our organization, and thinking about ideas and solutions for how we can be better.”

Supporting the Home Learning Environment

Being aware and in touch with the home environment of the students also allowed the principal to strategize for success. Participants showed supporting an at-home learning environment was very important to parents and teachers. It is also important for the principal to not expect perfection from the parents regarding the home learning environment. Principal Mrs. Q. explained this will allow all parties to work more diligently on building their relationship. When items and issues are discussed and addressed in a timely manner, productive dialogue can ensure the parent is keeping track of their children's work. Parent E explained her experience at a different school. She described how she felt when she received information about her son long after the behavior occurred, and how this was upsetting to her, “well, at one of my son’s conferences the teacher said [my son] is very silly and he is sometimes goofy. And so no one had ever alerted me that [my] son is so loud.”

On the other hand, parents felt obligated to follow-up on their children and make sure they develop and mature in a safe learning environment. For example, parent Mrs. H.A. shared, “Even though my daughter is in 4th grade, I have to check her assignments and support her. I want to make sure that my daughter understands that I am also

responsible for her learning.” Also, Mrs. H.A. pointed out that it is important that the school keeps parents informed and updates them about their children in different ways such as emails, phone calls, messages, and Schoology as well. She said, “Schoology is also a big bonus. The school provides a video guide for parents who need to learn how to use this app or find sources to help their children learn at home as well.”

Tailored Interventions

The school principal is also successful when they tailor interventions to meet the individual needs of parents and students. This adaptive and culturally responsive approach is well appreciated and fosters a sense of community and camaraderie. The data showed the principal used different tools to build relationships between parents and school in the community. I also found the principal used a variety of resources and tools for different types of engagement learning such as online videos providing explanations and support of web-based platforms functions. Some platforms included Facebook, the school web page, and Twitter.

One example of a tailored intervention was the school’s annual book fair. Here, many parents were looking for ways to support the school but did not have cash. The solution was found through the application and adoption of a cashless app. Tailored interventions can also be useful for principals who are called on by parents for support. Parent E. expressed the support she received from the principal who provided one-on-one guidance:

I did have one experience with the principle [where they provided individualized support]. I felt like my son was not sick, but he just did not feel good, and I told the principal I wanted my son to be punished, because [he was not] being honest

[about being sick]. [The principal] opened her door right away, and we had a conversation. [The principal asked] if I wanted him to be punished. I wanted to know if there was any kind of consequence if you're not sick and you don't go to school. And she was very willing to sit down with me, and talk to me. And we had a discussion, and I ended up saying that I felt it was okay that my son didn't get punished, but I wanted to at least know that ... My son knows that there is a consequence if you choose not to go to school. That is your job, and there is a consequence. And I felt that she dropped everything, and she said come into my room, because I asked her, "Do you have a minute?" And she said yes. And so she did sit down with me and talk to me about the rules about missing school.

In addition, the school counselor Mrs. B. explained how opportunities need to also be created at the district level, She said:

I think parent involvement has to include the district creating opportunities, the school creating opportunities for teachers, and the families themselves, feeling welcome enough that they're going to be involved and feeling like their voice matters.

According to the participants, it is important for the principal to be aware of happenings between the teachers and the families as well. According to Mr. Y., "If a parent is not engaged, I let the principal know. The principal will always reach out." As Mr. J. explained:

I copy the principal on emails to parents, so she's on the ground floor, and if it's something that is pretty short contentious, I will copy her where she can, where

her address is seen, and I will mention to the parents respectfully I'm just letting you know, I copied the principal on this because she may have an opinion.

Innovative Volunteering

The data provided several key pieces of evidence that suggested the successful principal is one who encourages volunteering from the parents and allows for innovation and creativity when eliciting volunteer efforts. For example, an innovative and creative principal critically thinks about where the parent and family are currently at and meets the family where they are. Upon understanding the dynamics of the parents, the parents time and talents, and values and desires for the school, the successful principal integrates exploration into the process of identifying volunteer opportunities to allow for maximum parent participation. As Mr. J. explained:

Volunteering will be completely different depending on people's life situations. At this school we're very fortunate to have a lot of parent involvement but it has much to do with the parents being educated, self-sufficient. There are many two parent homes at this particular school which makes it helpful.

In my observation of the Fall Festival and the African Drumming and Dance Featuring Christian Adeti event, I found the principal was very innovative in designing and planning events that centered and showcased a wide range of people. At these events, the principal was actively inviting additional conversations on how parents could get involved and noting event ideas families had. In my interview with Teacher W., she explained the principal was always looking on how to leverage parent talent and strength. In addition, teacher Mr. J. described how beneficial parent volunteering can be when it is tailored:

It is not helpful just to have people show up and hang around so we have tasks that we assign. We have reading groups and I'll put each kid into a group of five. And we put out the word for volunteers. There is a book group leader and I train them in on how to discuss a book at an appropriate level with the kids.

Also, document review of a school letter showed the principal demonstrated they were interested in diversity and willing to consider a range of activities and skills to be integrated into the school. In a letter distributed to parents of the school, the principal clearly invited all parents to volunteer and expressed a nimble and dynamic environment (see Appendix I as an example).

The participants in this study shared successful principals find ways to highlight the parents and bring them into the school community. For example, parent Mr. X. explained what he feels is important for him in terms of volunteering:

I am a project manager professionally. And so if, if you want something to happen, I can make it happen, right? I can do all the nuts and the bolts and the scheduling and calling and I can do all of that. Everybody has certain strengths and things they're good at.

For the MLK celebration, I observed parent Mrs. L. J. who was the featured speaker and presenter for an in-school event planned for the students for Martin Luther King Day. This was unique in that the principal found a way to feature and honor the parents and allow them to shine and flourish in a way that was appropriate for them and share these strengths with the entire community. Parents expressed they enjoy building relationships with others, and innovative and creative principals foster these relationships and bring

people together to form lasting friendships. These principal qualities are hallmark traits of a transformational leader.

Parent Mrs. H.A. explained how she enjoyed getting to know other parents at the school. She shared, “I really cherish my time as a volunteer at my child’s school, because it gives me an opportunity to build strong relationships with others.” Creative volunteering gave parents a rich experience in the classroom and they left feeling that they enjoyed their time and would be willing to repeat the experience. Mr. Y. explained the principal ensures an interpreter or a parent volunteer is available who speaks a different language to provide language assistance to volunteers, “The Somalian parents are more likely to volunteer if they know someone will guide them that speaks their language.” The school counselor Mrs. B. provided an example of how parents, family, and community members all work together at the end of the year to execute events such as field days and family picnics, she said:

it is wonderful. It's just lovely, it's really what gives this school that heart, you know, I think that being out in the big grounds, while there's field day on I can exchange comments with them about how wonderful their children are, it's an opportunity for community building. That is really wonderful here, that is something that really makes the school so special.

Volunteer opportunities can be academic or non-academic oriented. An academic volunteer opportunity may involve the parent volunteer helping students with their homework or reading to them at a public library. Non-academic opportunities may include helping with transportation to and from events, setting up and cleaning for events, tidying the classroom, helping with shelving the media room, and others. Innovation and

creativity may be incorporated into both types of volunteering. The principal who successfully organizes and promotes a community of volunteers, provides opportunities for parents to foster and promote academic skills for the students to succeed. School counselor Mrs. B. provided an example of an innovative volunteering opportunity for the classroom:

I help with creating plans for a learner who has a disability that is not in special education to make sure they're getting the kinds of accommodations they need to succeed. Our teachers are top notch, identifying and relating to the parents, you know, hey, I want you to know that your child needs some extra support- I have some volunteers from parents and family in the building, who are doing reading work. Would you be comfortable with your child having some extra help?

In this way, the students are able to receive additional assistance and one-on-one tutoring, for which the teacher or family may not have time for without creating a great deal of time-burden. For important tasks such as these, where the parent is teaching the child, it is important for the principal to build a solid and trusting relationship with the parents, so the parent has the confidence to teach the students. The parent almost must know they have the principal's support.

A fourth grade teacher Mrs. H.U. described how the principal provided volunteer opportunities for parents to come to the school and help struggling students in the relevant topic area. She said:

I'm pretty sure most teachers and/or grades in the fall send out a parent volunteer list of options, field trips or math game day or math tutoring or reading with kids

... It's a different kind of asking for parent involvement when it's that clearly related maybe to a kid who's struggling.

Many parents were interested in volunteering on a regular basis, and the school principal encouraged as much parent involvement as possible to help teachers. In 3rd grade teacher Mrs. W.'s interview, she explained how she perceived parent volunteers as a teacher.

I have some parents who volunteer in my classroom on a regular basis. Like on a weekly basis, they come in for an hour or two to volunteer. I have some parents who come in for special programming or when they are available. Some parents I can call to come to help with things. There are some parents who just drop in, you know, and then I just put them to work if they're available.

The principal who successfully brings parents to the school allows for and is comfortable with spontaneity. Some parents and family members are interested in visiting the school without planning the visit, and a principal who welcomes drop-ins and unannounced visits from the parents is able to foster a positive environment. By allowing parents to visit the school on their own volition, they are likely to feel comfortable dropping in when the time allows, and they can volunteer when it is convenient for them, without requiring a lot of additional steps and communication for planning the volunteering. For example, a classroom teacher, third grade teacher Mrs. W. explained:

I think that we have a lot of good activities for families to participate in ... I try to make it inclusive. I find that throughout the school year it's very rare that there isn't a child's parents or grandparents or somebody in their family who comes for something. [There are] really nice activities that are more informal for people who want to come [visit the school] and see their child.

An example of a volunteer opportunity at the school which provided for parent volunteers of non-academic tasks included helping students with Destination Imagination, which parents described through interviews. As described by parents, Destination Imagination (DI) is an event in which students work together as a team to solve problems together. They select a challenge and then create work together to create and present a solution. The process builds their skills in creative and critical thinking, problem-solving, risk-taking, project management, perseverance, and self-confidence. Each school has between five and six teams that work together for extended periods of time over the course of the semester. Teams work with a parent or volunteer coach after school throughout the fall and winter and participate in a regional competition at High School in mid-February. Parent Mrs. H.A. said:

As a parent, I liked that the principal trusted me to lead a group and I liked that she recognized my talents and interests, because I am very interested in this program. The principal checked in with me often to make sure everything was okay, answer any questions, and provide support and encouragement.

On the other hand, parent Mrs. S. found Destination Imagination's experience very hard and felt she needed more training and support from teachers. As her first experience, she explained, "Destination Imagination was actually, honestly, difficult. It was a bit chaotic. And honestly, I wish I had more help from the teachers in leading DI. It was a lot of work." Although it was very challenging and difficult, parent Mrs. S. appreciated the experience and wanted to remain as a volunteer "I wanted to give back that was my contribution. I wanted to do what I could." From a review of the school's

website, the principal showed innovation and creativity by adapting events specifically to allow for parent participation (see Appendix I as an example).

In addition, 2ed grade teacher Mr. J, explained how parents will come to help a child that they may not even know, but do so in order to help fill a gap:

We have parents who want to come in and help, but it's usually not their own child. Some teachers are ex teachers or have the skills and would like to just help society or their children's world in general. So they'll volunteer. That's kind of a way to kind of nudge the kids who never sadly didn't have the opportunity to read with a parent or be read to even.

Addressing Barriers for Participation

It is important for a principal to be innovative and creative in order to understand and overcome the limits parents have for volunteering their time, in-person, in the school setting. During the observations and interviews, participants described and emphasized the limitations and barriers parents face regarding their availability to volunteer in the school. The principal, Mrs. Q., explained awareness and self-reflection in her role as principal was key for ensuring family diversity in participation. She said:

The majority of our students are white, of European heritage, and I feel like people feel like, "Well, that's a white space, and so do I feel comfortable there? I don't have anything to contribute," is a possibility. When people come to the United States ... The expectations are different from other countries for parent involvement. So, I've had parents say to me, 'I came from Thailand, and in Thailand we don't tell the teachers what to do, so why would I tell you what to

do?’ And in the United States it's this expectation that the parents should be involved. And that is culturally very different for some families.

The principal, Mrs. Q., continued with an analysis of her own social position. She reflected:

One of my limitations is that I'm a white woman, I grew up in the United States, I can't necessarily pretend to understand the cultural experiences of everybody in the school, and so I know I have my own limits and my own bias. I make sure that I'm hearing from a lot of different people, and not just people like me.

As such, maintaining fair expectations and working to overcome barriers is important.

When asked what keeps parents from volunteering, the principal, Mrs. Q., provided her thoughts:

I think there are a lot of different reasons [parents don't volunteer]. I think probably working is the biggest reason. Parents aren't as involved because of work, [and] because of commitments. I will say even the parents that work are still involved to some extent. We have a really high percent of participation in conferences for example.

Language barriers for families in which English was a second language proved to be a deterrent for parent involvement at the school in many instances. Parents who felt they would not be able to communicate with the teachers and the other parents were less likely to be comfortable to attend school events and be present in the school setting. As Mr. Y. explained, “A Somilian family didn't come to the conference because they didn't understand the language.” To mitigate this issue, Mr. Y. explained the principal scheduled a one-on-one visit with the parents with an interpreter present. One of the

characteristics of the school principals is effective and active problem-solving, which is necessary in order to create language access bridges for parents and allow all language speakers to feel welcomed and valued in the school.

When the principal is aware of the unique language needs of the students, they may ensure there are other parents and interpreters at the event to assist the family with language needs and facilitate communication. Being aware of and having strategies to address language barriers is also very important. For example, principal Mrs. Q. shared, “I think language is also sometimes a barrier. If parents don't speak English and we don't have interpreters available, then people won't show up.” Relatedly, when the principal leveraged other parents who were fluent in a non-English language to reach out to parents who shared the same language, language access was achieved, and parents were more likely to feel like they were a valued part of the school community and attend the event. The principal, Mrs. Q., shared strategies that successfully broke barriers and brought families to school and overcame limitations these families faced, “We’ve tried a few times to do phone calls and personal invitations.”

Principals who are able to consider ways finances may be straining for families, and offer alternatives, were also successful at breaking barriers to family participation in school activities. Many school activities and events are fundraisers, which ask parents for significant monetary contribution through either donations or purchases. For families on tight budgets, this can be uncomfortable, as they are unable to contribute to the event fully and experience the event fully if they are unable to pay for the activities. As such, events that are not fundraisers are very effective at showing parents they are valuable, and they do not have to contribute financially to the school in order to attend events.

Breaking the barrier created by financial insecurity and encouraging families to share their talents, wisdoms, and their company with others was a successful strategy to support parent engagement and participation in school events and activities.

Summary of Findings

This chapter presented the findings gained from observations, interviews, and document review in this qualitative grounded theory case study. Participants provided various perceptions of familial engagement in public elementary schools. Five themes emerged from the data. These included: leadership, decision-making, honoring parent values, cultures, and language, and tailored intervention. These themes provided insights into how familial involvement may be advanced in public elementary schools. Table 6 provides a summary of the findings.

Table 6

Summary of the findings

Theme	Data Collected	Findings
Leadership	Interviews Observations Documents review	Welcoming environment, Communication, trust, and engaging families is key
Decision-making	Interviews Observations Documents review	Families and leaders should share goals and roles
Honoring Parent Values, Culture, and Language	Interviews Observations Documents review	Community engagement and the home learning environment is enhanced when culture is prioritized
Tailored Interventions	Interviews Observations Documents review	Families need innovative way to be involved and principals should address barriers to involvement

Note. Table describing the theme, data, and findings from the analysis.

A significant outcome in this study was evidence that supported the idea that the principal and families are both responsible for encouraging familial engagement. My research clearly supports the perspective that parents and the school must have a communicative, ongoing, and supportive relationship throughout the child's formal education. Together, parents, teachers, and the community can develop strategies and push the school forward, propelling a healthy and positive learning environment, supporting culture and values. I found principals who have excellent communication skills are most successful at building these strong relationships and developing a robust and engaging learning environment.

The study participants shared their insights and personal experiences about how familial involvement in the schools may be enhanced, and what supports are necessary for familial involvement. Additionally, the information provided reflected deep, rich, and personal experiences and connections the participants had to the topic and the way they see themselves as impacting and influencing the school. Insights from parents, teachers, and principals provided a wide lens to look from. A new role and set of responsibilities for all constituents. The transformational leader and families together take into account that parents have a wide range of talents, interests, and barriers regarding time and interest, and work together to create innovative and creative ways for all parents to become involved. In the next chapter, I describe how the data led to my findings and theory development and how principals and family can facilitate family involvement in the elementary schools to support bi-directional relationships. Also, I present my discussion of the research findings, implications of the findings for practice, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, INTERPRETATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study applied a qualitative case study with grounded theory analysis to develop a new model—Influence of Transformational Principals on Bi-Directional Relationships and Familial Involvement—of how principals and families can facilitate increased family/community involvement in the elementary schools. In this chapter, I provide a thorough discussion of my findings from my qualitative data analysis. By applying the grounded theory approach to build a model from the ground up, I was allowed to gain a deep and rich understanding from my participants who provided their lived experiences with the school and each other. Through this process, four themes emerged which provided evidence that for parental involvement to be maximized in the schools, the principal and parents must foster leadership, share decision-making, be culturally responsive to families, and tailor interventions and opportunities for familial involvement.

This chapter provides further discussion of my research findings, and how these findings may have implications for future researchers and educators. Throughout the literature review process, it became clear that school principals have a tremendous impact on how the school functions and how people interact and engage with the school and its functions. It is common for schools to report low attendance at parent nights and struggle to develop and implement strategies that will effectively promote parental involvement (Glasgow & Whitney, 2008). There is a significant gap in schools across the country between the desired and actual levels of parents' involvement, and this has fostered

considerable research interest to uncover strategies specifically developed for schools to promote increased and quality parental involvement.

To refine and explain how familial engagement is enhanced, a model was developed by Joyce Epstein (2001) two decades ago in order to guide educators toward effective strategies that support parent involvement. Of particular relevance, Epstein's model (2001) provides and describes six overarching qualities of parental involvement: positive home conditions, communication, involvement at school, home learning activities, shared decision-making within the school, and community partnerships (Epstein, 2008; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein et al., 2002). At the time it was produced, Epstein's model was the first to address the limitations of traditional definitions for family involvement in the schools. Epstein (2001) provided a parental involvement framework with parental involvement types which is currently referred to as Epstein's six types of parental involvement framework.

Epstein's (2001) model assumes the role of the principal is to give information (guideline) and request change from the parents. As noted by Bower and Griffin (2011), traditional definitions of parental involvement expect that making demands on families to be involved in the school will make the school more successful. However, Epstein's (2001) model, reciprocal demands are not made of the school to ensure the success of their families. As such, the burden of change is put on the family. It may be that there is a need to redefine parental involvement and develop broader frameworks that can make involvement more inclusive for families of color (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Jackson & Remillard, 2005; Mattingly et al., 2002). However, in my study, I found family involvement in the school may be more successful when principals encourage bi-

directional communication and parental involvement in ways that work for the family, and reflect understanding of the family's culture, language, beliefs, and lifestyle. The absence of emphasis on the bi-directional relationship between principals and families is a significant gap in the research (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein et al., 2002). Epstein's model, as written, suggests guidance for principals toward transactional leadership.

In the next section, I provide a discussion of the research findings, and discuss how these findings align with Epstein's model. I also describe a theoretical model that emphasizes the bi-directional relationship between families and the principal and explains how transformational leadership facilitates family involvement in the school. I follow with the implications, limitations, and recommendations for future researchers.

Discussion of the Research Findings and Themes

The purpose of this research study was to determine how school principals can best engage families and increase familial involvement in the school. By applying a qualitative case study and grounded theory approach, I sought to gain a better understanding of how principals and parents interact with one another through an in-depth analysis of the individual perspectives shared by school personnel, parents, and observations of school's events and document review.

Research Question 1: How Do School Principals Engage Parents and the Community and Facilitate their Involvement in the School?

Parents emphasized leadership helped them feel welcome. Enjoying a reciprocal relationship with the teacher was significant, but it was also important to feel one's relationship with the principal was also bi-directional. From my observation and interviews, making eye contact, smiling, being present, and acting with calm authority in

difficult situations shows the principal is trustworthy and can manage difficult environments. As found by Epstein and Dauber (2001) and supported by my findings, effective principals put forth effort into bi-directional communication between the school and home with intention toward cultural and linguistic appropriateness. These examples show when the principal brings others into programmatic and design decisions, they effectively allow for a bi-directional relationship, where not only is the principal bringing parents to the table, but they are also authentically valuing and using familial feedback and input to guide decision-making.

According to Epstein (2001), in order for the school principal to be a leader, they must create and foster a homeland environment in the school, the environment must be power-sharing and value mutual respect. As such, the successful principal is foremost a leader. The successful leader invites parents to make decisions and brings parents into tasks that involve decision-making and goals and objective formation. In this way, people other than the principal, who become important stakeholders regarding their contribution and influence into the daily functioning of the school found that effective principals allowed others to participate in important decision-making tasks and define goals and objectives for the organization. Shared decision also allows stakeholders to make important contributions and influence the daily operations of the school (Kellmayer, 1995). Relatedly, the results of the current study suggest the successful principal excels at bringing together members from the community to partake in school events and activities, and become committed, dedicated, and thoughtful supporters of the school. Community support was found to be beneficial from both social and financial aspects, in that community members may support the school by spending money during fundraising

events, attending festivals and book drives, and otherwise contributing monetarily.

Socially, community members that were engaged in the school volunteered at the school regardless of whether they had children there. They made concerted efforts to find ways to spend their time and talents enriching the students and helping reduce teacher burden and stress.

Research Question 2: How Do Parents Feel About the Principal's Leadership?

Parents shared the principal was clearly skilled at promoting advantageous partnerships between themselves and families. The principal did so within the confines of a safe environment (Epstein, 2001). Consequently, parents explained the principal-built communication channels, which made parents feel comfortable being engaged in important school administrative events that required decision-making, though they understood the principal was the person to make the final decisions. By encouraging and engaging parents, my data found familial voice becomes a standard, uncontested quality of each and every school meeting and event. As reported by Lareau and Horvat (1999), it is imperative for families from diverse backgrounds to have ample time to build comfort and trust in the school, which will facilitate a strong and lasting relationship. As Epstein et al. (2002) described, if principals see the children at the school as students only, they are unlikely to view the parents as part of the school, as they may view both the parents and the children as separate from the school.

Sharing roles and bringing parents to the table to have a part in decision-making events was also done well by the principal according to parents. Although ultimately the principal does have the final say and can veto any family-based decision, the principal still listened to the parents and authentically heard the parents' voice. From my findings,

as the document review revealed, all school emails have a contact number parents can call for any questions or concerns, which illustrates to families their thoughts and feelings are important. Also, the observations supported the visibility and accessibility of the principal. The principal was always near the families, making sure the guests and volunteers had everything they needed, were comfortable, and had a good time and safe environment.

As indicated in the literature and current data, principals who fail to address barriers in parental involvement due to linguistic and cultural diversity increase stress levels in parents and lessen the chance the parents will be comfortable in the school and be willing to participate in school activities and events (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 1990, Epstein & Jansorn, 2004; Crozier & Davis, 2007; Desforges & Aboucher, 2003). Parents indicated the principal was very involved in developing strategies and materials that were sensitive to the linguistic and cultural diversity of the parents and students. According to Epstein (1987), it is important for the school principal to use a variety of strategies for family engagement, which can help resolve differences and open communication.

Further, Henderson and Mapp (2003) suggested all communications be translated into families preferred language and principals and teachers make concerted efforts to seek and reach families to solicit their input regarding the best time to meet, what the best days to meet would be, and are authentic about their desires to integrate the family's culture into the school environment. Review of documents, observations, and transcripts found the families and personnel overwhelmingly agreed the principal was successful in allowing and eliciting all parents the courage and confidence to share their voices and

thoughts with one another. In doing so, participants explained that the principal was able to address significant language barriers that, if not addressed, could serve detrimental to the familial engagement and involvement. In doing so, mutual trust between school personnel and families are built (Adams & Christenson, 2000).

Research Question 3: What Barriers and Challenges Do School Principals Encounter with Facilitating Parent and Community Involvement?

Principals face a myriad of barriers and challenges, one of the most difficult challenges for principals in my study was working with parents who are absent from the school and contact is difficult. This could be because the parent is difficult to reach, or the principal is difficult for the parent to reach. As such, it can be difficult for the principal to identify and correct barriers for parental involvement in the school. As noted by Becker and Epstein (1982), when parents are absent from the school, or their presence is not felt, this is often due to differences in attitudes, habits, and a lack of basic knowledge on how collaborative relationships can be built. For example, principal Mrs. Q. shared language can be a barrier if parents do not feel confident about their English, or they feel like they will not understand what people are saying. As such, it is very important to have interpreters at events so that all parents will feel comfortable attending. Also, the school's principal confirmed the importance of having different cultures and diversity at the school and she confirmed her awareness in her role as principal to ensure families are able to participate, and their voices can be heard.

Some barriers found by Becker and Epstein (1982) and Chavkin (2005) include structural factors such language, cultural miscommunication, and inability to find the time or money necessary to participate. School counselor, Mrs. B., explained some

families will also be present and always volunteer. There are few obstacles for these families, and volunteering in the school is a priority. However, there are other families who have life situations that create many obstacles and barriers to involvement. This was often due to feeling they would not be able to communicate with the teachers and parents, so they avoided coming to the school and being present in the school setting. Productive dialogue between the teacher and parents can reduce the risk of miscommunications.

Findings revealed a key factor that makes the transformational principal successful in reducing and addressing barriers is the ability to tailor interventions to meet individual needs and adapt mainstream, general-population approaches to match the needs and be representative of the population at the school. Principals adapt interventions in many ways that promote familial involvement in the school through indirect and direct pathways. For instance, using a variety of communication resources and tools was a successful strategy to reach a great deal of parents. There is value in the principal sitting down and providing one-on-one tailored support individualized to meet the family needs. Rather than providing a standard response to a familial concern, the principal designed a mitigation strategy created to be successful with that particular family. This individualized support was effective, and in providing such support, the principal also successfully developed trust that was needed to overcome barriers.

Research Question 4: What Strategies are Employed for Addressing these Challenges?

Principals were found to employ many strategies for addressing challenges, and these were strategies largely fit into the qualities of a transformational leader. Bringing parents to the table has the desirable outcome of allowing parents to be involved in

decision-making processes (Epstein, 2001; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). A third grade teacher, Mrs. W., explained the school she was working in was finding different ways through the right and more comprehensive approach to encourage more parents to work with teachers on important activities for the students such as field trips and academic events. The principal was noted to work very hard to appreciate parent values and ensure the parents felt welcome at the school. Principals who break this wall and recognize the parents as partners in the student's education and development are working toward engaged families. The principal recognizes they share responsibility for the students, and as such, will work with the parents in tandem to create better programs and activities for the students.

Of utmost importance, addressing parental involvement barriers and facilitating an inclusive school, requires that the principal recognizes the importance of honoring familial values, culture, and language. My findings corroborated previous findings that principals and teachers who honor and respect diverse family cultures and backgrounds are the most likely to successfully build opportunities for familial engagement and this in turn provides opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to thrive and become educationally, socio-emotionally, and economically (Chao, 2000; Epstein, 2001; Horvat et al., 2003, Kim, 2009). However, the successful principal also understands they are in partnership with the parent. Where the principal expects the parent to prepare their child for school and allow their child the resources necessary to successfully grow and learn, it is the responsibility of the principal to maintain a healthy and safe learning environment once at the school.

The participants agreed the successful principal manages the partnership between themselves and the parents, continues to respect and honor the parent and child relationship, and supports the child at school and at home, intervening when necessary, but understanding their boundaries and limitations as the principal and not the parent. Participants pointed out it is important that the school keeps parents informed and updates them about their children in different ways such as emails, phone calls, messages, in an online platform tool titled Schoology. The principal explained this is a big bonus as teachers can grade from it, students can check information and parents can stay on top of what their students are doing. The school also provided tutorials, lessons, and assistance to parents in using all of the functions of this online tool. In addition, the calendar was updated regularly and allowed the parent to see all the items that were in the pipeline at a glance.

Effective strategies to overcome barriers also include the principal finding ways to highlight the parents and bring them into the school community. For example, from my observation, parent Mrs. L.J. was the featured speaker and presenter for an in-school event planned for the students for Martin Luther King Day. This was unique in that the principal found a way to feature and honor the parents and allow them to shine and flourish in a way that was appropriate for them and share these strengths with the entire community. In a letter distributed to parents of the school, the principal clearly invited all parents to volunteer and expressed a nimble and dynamic environment. The principal wrote this was the last call for any Great Gathering donations for the Fall Festival. The principal described these events and invited all parents to think about their talents and how these could contribute. She asked in her letter if they could teach or if they could

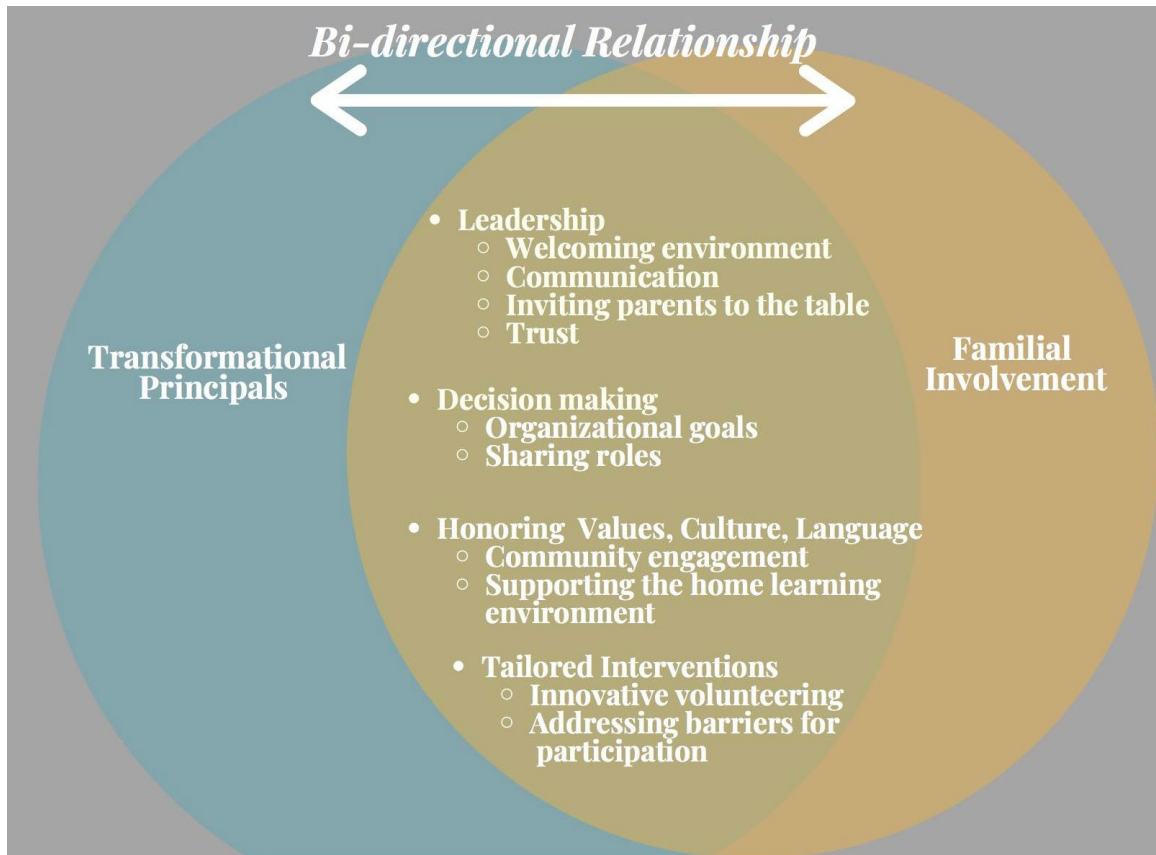
sew in order to provide examples. She then thanked parents for considering volunteering their time and talents.

Grounded Theory Development

From my data, I came up with a new definition for familial involvement that supports my findings. The new definition for familial involvement requires a school principal who honors transformational leadership, and works toward engaging families in bi-directional relationships, where the families and the principal ultimately work together to achieve shared goals and investments in the school. In this definition, the bi-directional relationship requires both the transformational leader and the families to promote leadership, involvement in school decision-making, honoring family cultural values, and creating pathways for all families to volunteer. I integrated four main themes into my model: leadership, design-making, honoring parent values, culture, and language, and tailored interventions. I also integrated the sub-themes within each theme. In this conceptualization, the bi-directional relationship between principals and families facilitated from transformational leadership, along with the decoded and analyzed data, is organized and explored. In developing the new model, *Influence of Transformational Principals on Bi-Directional Relationships and Familial Involvement*, I returned to my research questions and themes and found, overwhelmingly, the principal must display leadership, and their leadership is paramount to familial involvement. I developed this model to understand the bi-directional relationship between the principal and the families and incorporate the themes and sub-themes (See Figure 3).

Figure 3

Influence of Transformational Principals on Bi-Directional Relationships and Familial Involvement



Note. Influence of Transformational Principals on Bi-Directional Relationships and Familial Involvement. This figure describes how bi-directional relationships advance familial involvement (Alhumam, 2021).

As my model illustrates, the principal, as a transformational leader, facilitates a bi-directional relationship with parents. This includes creating a welcoming environment, ensuring bi-directional communication, trust, and inviting parents to the table. As defined by Epstein (2001), communication refers to a reciprocal relationship between teachers and parents on a wide and unlimited range of topics. This model reflects the finding that

teachers and parents appreciate school principals who design procedures to allow for effective communication and a constant information flow from the home to the school and vice versa. The principal, through leadership, decisions making, honoring culture, and tailored interventions fosters this reciprocal relationship. This changes the shape and energy of the families, who, in turn, respond favorably and extend their own pleasantries. This model supports Epstein's (2001) observation that principals within public schools must maintain relationships and encourage parental involvement in the schools. As depicted in the model, the principal and families also share decision-making roles and power.

Organizational goals and sharing roles are important here. Participants expressed approval for when the principal develops a space for parents to become leaders and serve as representatives of the school, such as was the case in the Destination Imagination activity, where parents were team leaders and shared the role of the authority. Parents can also help inside the classroom and volunteer to tutor students in different subjects such as reading or math and help students with their homework or understand concepts they are struggling with. In this way, the environment is nimble and flexible, and allows parents to volunteer to assist with academic work as well as more traditional volunteer activities such as helping out at field trips and fundraising events. Also, important in both role sharing and the attainment of organizational goals is the ability of the principal to include representation of all languages and cultures, and that shared roles must be shared among all the parents, not a subset of the student population. Epstein (2008) explained principals should include families in the decision-making process and: include families as participants in school decisions and develop as parent leaders and representatives.

A third element in the model is honoring parent values and culture. This is done through supporting the home learning environment, and community engagement. In being intentional about bringing together cultural norms and building supporting networks, the principal was able to facilitate community engagement and were willing to meet the diverse needs of the parent and student body. As such, my findings strongly suggest principals will be successful in building trust by requesting multilingual support through parent involvement and enrichment activities and that this is an important indicator of transformational leadership (Amitay et al., 2005; Bogler, 2001; Burns, 1978). Honoring the culture of different families requires the principal is aware of and sensitive to differences in needs, resources, and priorities of families and children within the consideration of the home as the learning environment, which shifts from the learning environment always being assumed to be the school.

Lastly, tailored interventions are important to be designed in partnership between parents and the principal, and the transformational leader provides this support. Tailored interventions include innovative volunteering. This refers to a transformational principal who makes concerted efforts to find ways that may be outside of traditional volunteering efforts, to engage parents and invite them to the school to participate and volunteer their time and talents. Specifically, I found the successful principal addresses barriers to participation by encouraging all parents to become active in the school arena and presents multiple and diverse ways to engage parents so they may share their skills and talents in the school setting. Through innovative volunteering and encouraging volunteering from all parents, the principal necessarily must be innovative, so they may speak to all parents, in addition to exhibiting a great deal of creativity when designing and proposing

volunteer opportunities. For parents, volunteering provides additional benefits such as support and friendship from other parents. These become important relationship building opportunities and allow parents from all cultures and languages to meet each other and network for support. As stated by Epstein and Jansorn (2004), all parents should be regular participants at the school and should be constantly seen and heard in all aspects of the school and learning environment. As Epstein (2001) suggested, all educators must be prepared to draw on all of the resources that will help students succeed in school, including families and communities.

Implications

This study carries' important implications for increasing parental involvement at school and creating bi-directional relationships between families and school principals. As the need for parental involvement increases, schools grow in size, and as resources dwindle, the principal and families must work together to facilitate familial involvement in the school. Familial involvement in the schools may have long-term implications for the ultimate success of the school. In addition, student success and academic achievement may also be positively implicated with the presence of parents in the school setting. As discussed by Pattnaik and Sriram (2010), parent involvement has historically been important for understanding if a school will provide students with academic success. The positive benefits for parental involvement has long-term effects on students and their academic success, even if the parental involvement occurs primarily in the formative years (Price, 2002).

The new model, Influence of Transformational Principals on Bi-Directional Relationships and Familial Involvement, addresses gaps in Epstein's (2001) Overlapping

Spheres of Influence Framework. In my new model, the relationships between family and principal enhance the bi-directional relationships. Transformational leadership is a mechanism by which principals encourage involvement of families in the school. The transformational leader must be the catalyst at the core level who communicates and engages families in bi-directional relationships, in which the family and principal then work together to achieve success through their mutually beneficial relationships. Based on the responses from my data, it is evident the parental involvement is highly valued and desired by both teachers and principals in this school and setting.

My respondents expressed a strong preference for increased parental involvement compared to lack of involvement and were interested to learn more about how to increase parental involvement, explore the role of the principal in making this happen, and establish new roles for all stakeholders. Parents and teachers both indicated principals needed to be effective communicators, friendly, warm, and interested in the parents in order to secure buy-in. This implication, in turn, supports Epstein's six types of family involvement such as communicating, volunteering, decision-making, and collaborating. This recognition can be a starting point for the beginning principal who is new to transformational leadership as related to parental involvement.

This implicates the principal as the main actor in encouraging and fostering successful communication, collaboration, and developing unique and creating volunteering experiences that will allow all parents a chance to participate. Higher education constituents can use the new model, Influence of Transformational Principals on Bi-Directional Relationships and Familial Involvement, to embed in licensure program curriculum for principals in order to make the academic experience more

successful for the principal to learn how to involve parents at school and develop bi-directional communication between school's principals and family. In doing so, principals will learn and utilize bi-directional communication strategies that will encourage and sustain parental involvement. For example, due to the findings that transformational leadership increases parental involvement, school leaders may look into developing and implementing training for their principals focused on transformational leadership. School officials may also consider putting expectations into the principal's position description and job description dictating that the school principal become learned in transformational leadership, and skilled at applying transformational leadership in real-world settings to maximize parental involvement.

This study has important implications for school policy. For example, this implicates the school district to adopt policy that requires training for their principals so they may be versed and able to apply concepts from Epstein's (2001) model of parental involvement. There could also be policy that dictates how volunteering requests will be made, such as through a newsletter accessible to all, with emphasis on inclusion and equity in the volunteering recruiting process. Some examples of different mediums that could be used to increase familial communication strategies include handouts, newsletters, websites, emails, telephone calls, and recorded messages that contain information on how parents can get involved and prepare parents to be welcomed into the school.

There are also important implications for families. For example, families are also responsible for ensuring and committing to effective communication with the principals ensuring the district, administrators, and staff are communicating the needs of the school

effectively. For instance, a school-wide newsletter that routinely describes to parents what the needs are for volunteers, and explains exactly what is needed, is successful in that parents know exactly what the need is and exactly what to do to volunteer. Within the newsletter, a link may be provided that allows parents to sign up online to volunteer, see what other parents are volunteering, and identify the need for volunteers. There could also be training and courses that would be available for parents to ensure they are prepared and have the background and preparation to perform the volunteer activity. This allows parents ample opportunities to get involved, build their skills, and is respectful of their time and schedule, and allows them to volunteer and sign up for a time slot when it is convenient for them. School districts are responsible for finding new and creative ways to ensure that all parents are aware of when and how to volunteer, and all parents are equally offered volunteering opportunities.

Limitations

I acknowledge this study is limited in scope and as such, may not generalize to schools in other parts of the country (i.e., rural or suburban with low diversity) and different populations of students and families. Future studies may wish to expand this analysis and look at different types of systems across multiple schools and districts to better account for variations in community and educational culture. Because my understanding of stakeholder involvement in the schools is intentionally broad, the resulting suite of factors or codes for impacting change is inevitably quite wide. There are many additional considerations for stakeholder engagement future researchers could pursue in-depth.

There are other limitations to note. Given the advent of a global pandemic, the number of people who were interviewed was small, and it is possible that the people interviewed do not represent the average parent, teacher, school counselor, or principal in the given region. As such, it is suggested that replication also involves a larger sample size and more robust sampling procedures. Also, observing different events from different schools could inform researchers on different ways in which schools engage. The study could also be replicated with participants of different demographics, such as gender, age, education, etc. to understand if those factors would generate different findings. Attempts to replicate the study by manipulating the geographic region, population, size, age, and number of respondents would allow for a robust testing of the model to better understand the applicability of the study's implications on a larger scale and add depth to the current model.

Lastly, personal bias is an important limitation. It is possible that as non-American international student and as an educator who has been both a teacher and assistant principal in a different country, I carried expectations on how people should answer questions without realizing it. Also, it is possible that as a parent of children at the school, and as a parent who often volunteers, I could have over emphasized the importance of volunteering inadvertently, given my personal beliefs. To overcome this limitation, I began my study by examining potential bias in my approach and in my conclusions. I looked carefully at my relationship and how I communicated with my participants to ensure all of my questions were asked in the same way, were asked neutrally, and that I avoided asking any leading questions. It is also possible that in my

memos, I wrote observations and notes that were skewed toward a certain orientation. As such, careful critical reflection and inquiry was a constant aspect of the current study.

Future Research

This study provided a deep collection of data that provided important insights into transformational leadership by way of the principal. One of the positive aspects of Epstein's model are that it encompasses the traditional definitions of parental involvement and recognizes the role of parents in the home; bi-directional and reciprocal communication allows for this importance to surface, be seen, and accounted for (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein et al., 2002). Principals with strong communication skills are transparent in their belief that communication is a bidirectional endeavor, thereby cultivating a welcoming environment where parental involvement is enhanced (Barnard, 2004; Ingram et al., 2007; Lopez & Donovan, 2009).

School counselor Mrs. B. emphasized solving issues about communication with the family is very important to solve and share all the problems to support students' learning environment. She explained how parents feel safe coming to conferences, and that conferences are an excellent way for the principal and teachers to establish a welcoming environment by paying close attention to the parent's expressions of needs and concerns. Having a voice and making sure that there is a safe space for the parent to share their voice was extremely important for advancing a welcoming environment, and school conferences provided an appropriate setting for these actions. A related sub-goal to the key theme of decision-making is organizational goal attainment. Here, the principal recognizes partnerships must be interdisciplinary and include the school, family, and community. In order for organizational goals to be attained, all partners must come

together and contribute equally to the decision-making processes. In this way, the school principal facilitates the bi-directional relationship in encouraging parents to provide feedback for decision-making, and by providing networks for parents to join in which they link to other parents. Here, all parties may learn together and work to achieve shared goals that will maximize student achievement and school success.

Future researchers may wish to extend this study by investigating the views of more types of school personnel on principal leadership. This may include teacher aides, parent volunteers, special education teachers, music and art teachers, gym teachers, and support staff such as cafeteria workers, custodians, and librarians. All of these positions in which the staff member has less interaction with students and parents may imply different perspectives for transformational leadership, and a different view on why and how parents do not get involved in the school. It may also be beneficial to capture a wider range of people for how they feel about the school culture and collect their views on how schools may promote effective, school-family partnerships to support student learning and development.

Additional researchers may wish to look at how Epstein's (2001) model and transformational leadership benefit the principal from a professional standpoint. For example, a researcher may want to understand how a principal can develop professionally and move up in the career ladder. Investigating incentives for adopting transformational leadership could be very interesting in understanding how principals succeed professionally in their careers. This study is also unique in that it may be replicated anywhere in the world, as all countries have educational systems, students, and parents. For example, the research questions of the current study could be asked of principals in

public school in Saudi Arabia, which has a different method for preparing principals for leadership. It would be interesting to understand how transformational leadership benefits principals differently depending on the educational system of the country they reside.

Conclusion

From the beginning of education and schools, parental involvement has been a forefront issue, found in the country's legislative history and detailed through timeline accounts of how school principals gained prominence in the educational system. The current study introduced an established and well-researched construct, transformational leadership, and hypothesized that transformational leadership could be important for understanding why or why not school principals were successful at obtaining parental involvement and volunteering efforts in their given school. Through the discussion and exploration of transformational leadership the suggestion was strongly supported that transformational leadership was a significant contributor to increased parental involvement in the schools. Two analytical frameworks, Epstein (2001) and Burns (1978) notably observed student performance was not only about what the student did in the classroom, but also how the parent was involved in the school setting. Together, this led to my model Influence of Transformational Principals on Bi-Directional Relationships and Familial Involvement. This study provided evidence that principals and families support one another, and other parents, as well as students, and encourage parental involvement, which in turn, motivates and promotes familial involvement.

The key finding in this study is Influence of Transformational Principals on Bi-Directional Relationships and Familial Involvement that explains how transformational leadership and bi-direction relationships facilitate parental involvement and fosters new

collaborations. As such, this study found transformational leadership is a notable and effective characteristic and strategy for the school principal to adopt, and that bi-directional relationships ensure the principal is not solely responsible for familial involvement. Transformational leadership can recruit and sustain parental involvement in the schools, increase the visibility of parents in the school setting, provide important resources for teachers through the work of parents, and provide important decision-making capital and develop a school where all students grow and thrive.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: A Letter of Support from the School Principal

Research Support Letter

To the University of St. Thomas IRB:

I have been made aware of Ibrahim Alhumam's research project entitled, *Coming Together: Principals' Leadership, Parental Involvement and Community Building in Education*, and his plan to perform qualitative data collection at [REDACTED] Elementary School during the Spring term of 2020.

The research will consist of observation of two specified school-wide events (the Spring Festival and one event yet to be determined), in addition to interviews with School Leadership, Non-Faculty School Staff, School Faculty, and Parents of students enrolled at the school. There will be no direct interaction with students for research purposes throughout the course of the study, save that which comes from being an observer.

Due to the fact that our school has been officially recognized by the US Department of Education for its ability to incorporate parental and community involvement into its programming, and that parental-leadership relationships are very important to us at this school, it seems to be an appropriate environment for Ibrahim to carry out his research, given the focus of his study.

I understand that this research will be carried out following sound ethical principles and that participant involvement in this research study is strictly voluntary and provides confidentiality of research data, as described in the protocol. Further, participation for our educators is in no way tied to their employment, nor will their participation or non-participation have negative consequences (eg. disclosure of stigmatizing information; connection to seniority, promotion or tenure, etc.) on their employment.

Therefore, as a representative of [REDACTED] Elementary School, I agree that Ibrahim Alhumam's research project may be conducted at our school.

Sincerely,



Appendix B: IRB Approval



All for the Common Good™



Date: February 10, 2020

To: Ibrahim Alhumam

From: Sarah Muenster-Blakley, Institutional Review Board

Project Title: [1516680-1] Coming Together: Principals' Leadership, Parental Involvement and Community Building in Education

Reference: New Project

Action: Project Approved

Approval Date: February 10, 2020

Expiration: February 9, 2021

Dear Ibrahim:

I have reviewed your protocol and approved your project as reflected in the application that you submitted. Please note that all research conducted with this project title must be done in accordance with this approved submission.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and assurance that the project is understood by the participants and their signing of the approved consent form. The informed consent process must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between you and your research participants. Federal law requires that each person participating in this study receive a copy of the consent form. All original records relating to participant consent must be retained for a minimum of three years upon completion of the project.

Amendments to targeted participants, risk level, recruitment, research procedures, or the consent process as approved by the IRB must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementing changes to the research study. No changes may be made without IRB approval *except* to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the participant.

Any problems involving project participants or others must be reported to the IRB within one (1) business day of the principal investigator's knowledge of the problem. A problem reporting form is available in the IRBNet Document Library or on the IRB website and should be submitted to muen0526@stthomas.edu. Any non-compliance or complaints relating to the project must be reported immediately.

Approval to work with human participants with this project will expire on **February 9, 2021**. Please direct questions at any time to Sarah Muenster-Blakley at (651) 962-6035 or muen0526@stthomas.edu. I wish you success with your project!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Muenster-Blakley".

Sarah Muenster-Blakley, M.A., CIP
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Appendix C: Consent Form

Research Participation Key Information

Coming Together: Principals' Leadership, Parental Involvement and Community Building in Education

What you will be asked to do:

We ask participants to interview with the researcher. The time commitment is about 60- minute interviews and the study will take place at convenient place (e.g. private room in a library, coffee shop, local park).

Participating in this study has risks:

Possible violation of privacy - I will be observing participants at school events, which may feel invasive to some, even after they consent to the study. This risk can be associated with the observations because it cannot be comfortable for the participants sometimes during observations.

School leadership in particular may play an integral role in creating an environment that makes it easier for parents to be involved - yet little data is collected about the relationship between school leadership and parental involvement. There are numerous barriers that prevent parental involvement, but while parents or teachers tend to be blamed for a lack of effort when children struggle, there is an important place for principals as well in actively fostering parental involvement, and thus student success. There is much research about the positive effects of parental involvement on student academic outcomes, but little information about what schools, particularly school leaders, can do to encourage this involvement. Despite this lack of research, a report from Michigan's 21st Century Education Commission acknowledged the critical role of school leaders and emphasized pivotal parent involvement practices in an attempt to confirm a child-centered education system that focuses on excellence. There is clear evidence that developing collaboration between principals and parents is essential for student success, but further study is needed. I will use my study to address this research gap. This dissertation project will investigate the relationship between principals' leadership style and parental involvement in elementary school education. In particular, I will explore how school principals can influence parental involvement at educational institutions in the United States.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

You are invited to participate in a research study to investigate the relationship between principals' leadership style and parental involvement in elementary school education. The title of this study is Coming Together: Principals' Leadership, Parental Involvement and Community Building in Education. You were selected as a possible participant and are eligible to participate in the study because you are principal, school staff, teachers, and parents at St. Anthony Park Elementary school. The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision whether you would like to participate or not.

What will you be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

- You will have an interview with the researcher for 60 minutes long.
- You will meet with the researcher at accessible location (e.g. private room in a library, coffee shop, local park).

- You may ask additional questions, or follow up questions if needed, or express concerns at any time to the researcher.
- The researcher will use audiotaped recording during this interview.

What are the risks of being in the study?

The study has risks:

- Possible violation of privacy - I will be observing participants at school events, which may feel invasive to some, even after they consent to the study. This risk can be associated with the observations because it cannot be comfortable for the participants sometimes during observations.

Here is more information about why we are doing this study:

This study is being conducted by Ibrahim Alhumam, and my advisor, Dr. Eleni Roulis in the Department of Teacher Education at STU. This study was reviewed for risks and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of St. Thomas.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between principals' leadership style and parental involvement in elementary school education. Through grounded theory methodology, I will answer this research question: How do U.S. public elementary school administrative practices impact parental involvement in educational institutions?

There are no direct benefits for participating in this study.

We believe your privacy and confidentiality is important. Here is how we will protect your personal information:

Your privacy will be protected while you participate in this study:

- Inconveniences related to this research have been reduced as much as possible by hosting the interview at a mutually agreed upon location (in private spaces so you may speak freely). Efforts will be made to reduce travel time, parking hassles, conflicts with childcare, etc. We will work collectively to determine a convenient and accessible location (e.g. private room in a library, coffee shop, local park).
- There are no photographs will be taken for the participants.

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any reports I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you. The types of records I will create include:

- All the data will be maintained in a password-protected device. All files with identifiers will save on my University of St. Thomas One Drive account for security and privacy.
- I will be the only people with access to the data indicated above and my advisor, Dr. Eleni Roulis.
- Audio recordings will be used during the interview. I will use Voice Memos App that I have it on my computer to record the interview. This audio recordings will help me to review and transcribes the data. Audio recordings will be deleted after transcription.
- All data will be destroyed in Spring of 2023, after 3 years.

This study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the research with no penalties of any kind.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether to participate or not will not affect your current or future relations with any employers or institutions or the University of St. Thomas. There are no penalties or consequences if you choose not to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected about you will be destroyed unless it is already de-identified or published and I can no longer delete your data. You can withdraw by email the researcher please contact the researcher, Ibrahim Alhumam at iaalhumam@stthomas.edu and he will remove your name from the list of eligible. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask questions about parents' feelings about school involvement, which may trigger painful memories of their past experiences in school as students.

Who you should contact if you have a question:

My name is Ibrahim Alhumam. You may ask any questions you have now and at any time during or after the research procedures. If you have questions before or after we meet, you may contact me at my phone number: (206)355-4374 or email address: iaalhumam@stthomas.edu. Or you can contact my Advisor Dr. Eleni Roulis, at (651)962-4837 or email address: e9roulis@stthomas.edu. Information about study participant rights is available online at <https://www.stthomas.edu/irb/policiesandprocedures/forstudyparticipants/>. You may also contact Sarah Muenster-Blakley with the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-6035 or muen0526@stthomas.edu with any questions or concerns (reference project number IRBNet ID 1516680-1).

STATEMENT OF CONSENT:

I have had a conversation with the researcher about this study and have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age. I give permission to be audio recorded during this study.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Print Name of Study Participant

Signature of Researcher

Date



Appendix D: Observations Field Notes Example

Observational Event/ date/ time	Fall Festival (October 6, 2017) Friday from 5:50PM - 7:50PM
Description of Event	Notes Taken (example)
<p>The fall festival is a way for students and their families to come together and celebrate the fall season. It is also a fundraising event to garner money for the school. The fall festival included all students (K - Grade 5), their families, and friends. The fall festival brought the community together and to celebrate the Fall season. At the end of this event, almost 13,000 raised toward the goal of 15,000.</p> <p>Most activities were between 1 and 3 tickets. Each ticket cost 50 cents.</p> <p>The family engaged at that event as a volunteer to sell the ticket and food like apples, cakes, Pizza, popcorn and cookies which were made by the family. Also, they organized some games and activities for children and their families.</p>	<p>There were many people there to support the school, and I thought it was very crowded.</p> <p>More than 300 people were at the event. I noted that each family needed a ticket for their child. The parents were happy to pay the amount requested. I did not observe anyone complaining or talking about how expensive the event was.</p> <p>I watched several families get tickets for their children. The children were happy to see the tickets and were excited. The children seemed very excited to see each other out of the school.</p> <p>Some of the kids were emailing and texting each other to see where the others were.</p> <p>There were parents at the front and throughout the area that were volunteering.</p> <p>In the middle of the lunchroom were children gathered together dancing to music which was played by the DJ who was set up on the lunchroom stage.</p> <p>The parents that were volunteering appeared very happy to give out prizes and smiled and laughed when the kids won prizes and were excited.</p> <p>The general theme I noted was that the parents were interested in keeping everyone happy, not just the children.</p>

	<p>The DJ was playing popular music and the kids with their bright costumes were jumping up and down and moving their arms to the beats of Taylor Swift.</p> <p>At this event there are many families from the neighborhood and middle and high school kids who come to attend and have fun. The most popular activities are the DJ where children, parents, family, and teachers participate in dancing. The school principal was standing at the main entrance making sure everyone was engaged and happy and no one was facing problems or having issues</p>
Everyone who was working as a volunteer wearing a bright yellow t-shirt that said, "Silent Auction Team Member" and had a picture of a wolf, which is the mascot of the school.	I was wondering, why did they choose this color? Who chose it? Why this sentence especially?
Outside activities	<p>I observed many people who were not students at the school eating food outside on the picnic tables. I could tell they weren't from the school because of their size. They were too large to be in elementary school.</p> <p>The former students were very big. They came with their friends to participate in the activities. They were also texting each other and looking to see if their friends were there or if they were already there where they were at.</p> <p>I was interested in knowing more about the donation process because I realize the donations go toward improving the school which needs to be done quickly. This helped me understand the organization of the fundraising event in terms of where the money goes and how the money is allocated.</p>

	<p>I thought that the Math Pizza Party and the Marathon Day were good activities that I was interested in donating for.</p> <p>I also considered donating to the Reading Pizza Party. I felt very good about knowing that my donations could go toward activities that I choose, instead of being determined by someone else.</p>
End of the Event: Closing	<p>The end of the night, the principal was standing at the entrance to say good-bye to everyone The principal seemed to make sure everyone was happy. She asked people if they had fun.</p> <p>I observed that the principal was very happy and had a lot of energy. I thought that this was very good for her, as she wasn't tired even though she had been at the school all day. I observed the positive vibe and good feelings that she made sure people left the event with.</p> <p>There were many families who came and talked to the principal. They were smiled and thankful for the wonderful time.</p> <p>I spoke to the principal as she was getting ready to leave. I said, "Thank you so much for putting together this program." The principal said, "Don't thank me, it was all the teachers and the parents that put this on."</p> <p>The principal was smiling and dressed in bright colors and laughed with parents and friends again while I spoke with her.</p> <p>I noted that many children went up to hug her before they left, and the principal gave all of the children a really big hug,</p> <p>All of the children left with large smiles on their faces.</p>

	<p>The principal said to me, “I’m so glad that even the kids that have graduated from here have come back tonight. It makes me think that they are really connected to this school, and it was nice of them to come share this night with us.”</p> <p>I left the event at 7:50. I noted how the principal performed an engaging role and guided the event and the mood of the event with her positive energy, smiles, and friendly manners.</p> <p>The principal told us to have a wonderful night.</p> <p>I wondered how many meetings the principal did with the staff, teachers, and the participants at the end of the event. I observed her talking to dozens of people. I’m sure she spoke to more.</p> <p>I wanted to know more about what parents were talking about when they left, and what they thought of the event.</p>
Observational Event/ date/ time	Martin Luther King Day Celebration (January12, 2018) Friday from 8:45am to 10:45 am.
Description of Event	Notes Taken (example)

<p>This event invited parents and families to an event featuring MLK for the entire school (K - Grade 5). There were planned recitals, speakers, and messages of peace and hope provided by influential leaders. It was a very crowded event. More than 300 people. The hallway was filled with a bustling and positive energy emanating from the families. Several grandparents were in attendance, clutching their grandchild's hand, and guiding them to the main room where the celebration would take place.</p>	<p>I arrived before the event officially started at 8:45. There was still nowhere to park</p> <p>I drove around the school parking lot that was packed with minivans and sedans, cars and vehicles that suggested large loads and lots of people.</p>
<p>Visual set-up and organization of the event.</p>	<p>In the school's gymnasium I noticed that the seats were lined up in rows, facing a makeshift stage consisting of rows of bleachers.</p> <p>The bleachers were completely covered by the bodies of the children, with no area of bleacher to be seen.</p> <p>The teachers were arranging the students in order, so they were all organized, shortest to tallest on the bleachers, grouped by classes.</p> <p>The row of children became more voluminous from left to right, and the gradient was evident as the small bodies of the second graders anchored the left and the large filled out bodies in comparison, of the third graders anchored the right end.</p> <p>Some parents were standing, and others were sitting on chairs.</p> <p>I noted that parents were happy and very excited to see their children, which was wonderful and amazing that the school was able to have all this number and be organized in one place.</p>

	<p>I followed the bustling crowd of excited parents, grandparents, and children, who were moving in a fairly straight and organized blob down the hallway.</p>
<p>Spacing of students, appearance of students.</p>	<p>Regardless of size, the children were all packed in, elbow to elbow, without a bit of space between them.</p> <p>Some of the kids were well groomed, where others wore clothes that were clearly too large or small for them.</p> <p>I noted that the colors chosen to be worn by the children were all very different. I wondered who was responsible for the colors and if it was to make it match with MLK dreams of equality.</p> <p>All these questions led me to question my assumption about the underpinnings of the black lives matter movement.</p> <p>There was a clear sign of the range of privilege within the class, however, all the children seemed happy and did not appear to be thinking about inequity and social justice, so I decided that I would not think about it either and just allow myself to enjoy the day,</p> <p>In the back of my mind I did make a mental note to talk to the principal about how children who don't have the means to buy clothes, are able to come to school in a particular uniform in special circumstances such as this one.</p>
<p>Staff observation: Mr. B.O., the music teacher.</p>	<p>As I looked around I noted the music teacher, Mr. B. O, a large man who was not wearing the same uniform as the children, at his piano.</p>

	<p>He was carefully and seriously monitoring the children, making sure they were all in place, and getting up to help a student adjust or find their placing on the bleachers.</p> <p>Soon, we heard the children start clapping.</p> <p>My assumption is that the music teacher was the lead in putting the event together. The music teacher helped the students know what to do and set up practice times with the students.</p> <p>I wondered how involved the principal was in arranging the music practice times. I did not see the principal talk to Mr. B.O. Mr. B.O. was doing all of the work himself.</p>
Clapping and showing appreciation for the event.	<p>The clapping started suddenly and furiously, with kids jumping up and down on their bleacher spot to maximize the power of the clap and put as much force as possible into their applause.</p> <p>The children, clapping and laughing and jumping, were all looking at the end of the room, and soon I saw what they were clapping for. I thought it might be someone important to the cause of civil rights, like a political leader or an advocate of change.</p>
Applause for the Principal	<p>It was the principal dressed in business casual attire, proudly walking toward the bleachers and ready to position herself in front of the children and parents to address the crowd of eager family and friends, excited for the celebration.</p> <p>The teachers were busy keeping the children from clapping. They were working to get the kids to settle down so</p>

	<p>they would be composed and calm as the music would soon start.</p> <p>The current principal spoke to the audience, taking her place. She echoed old principal's sentiment of welcome, and took some time to explain to the parents all the work that went into the current production.</p> <p>She took some time to talk about the teachers that made it possible, and also extended a sincere thanks to the music teacher, who clearly had earned his money on this project.</p> <p>The applause was warranted. The principal that received the applause, principal, was like a martyr, and might as well have been considered a political leader, as she was the old principal that retired at the end of the year.</p>
The event begins.	<p>The performance began with the students providing quips from the life and history of MLK, followed by a song.</p> <p>As the students started their performance, I looked around the audience and noted the parents faces and expressions.</p> <p>Several parents were moved, and had tears welling up in their eyes.</p> <p>One woman was visibly weeping, trying, rather unsuccessfully, to keep her sobs quiet. Parents that were not crying or tearing up, were watching the performance intently.</p> <p>My neighbor, the man sitting next to me, was a pleasant African man. I asked him, "Do you think it's ironic that all of these white people are crying about the MLK, when back in the day they were supportive</p>

	<p>of segregation and worked to keep black people out of places like this?”</p> <p>I wondered if he thought it was ironic too, as a black man. I wasn't sure, and still am not sure, how politically correct this was, and I hope that I did not offend him by bringing up historical trauma and taking him back to a day of segregation and inequality. However, it is also true that he might have felt that not much has changed, and some would argue that segregation and even slavery still exists, as evidenced by the large number of black men in prison.</p> <p>However, I was happy that he seemed more than willing to talk, and his openness and kindness was very sweet and I believe we bonded and came together from this conversation.</p>
<p>A Special Visitor</p>	<p>Toward the end of the singing, the music teacher stood up and addressed the audience. He said, “Now we are going to have a very special visitor and have a special story to share, Mrs.L.J. She was a mom at this school several years ago.</p> <p>She was also an actor, a black woman, with a bright smile, and a striking purple sweater covering her broad shoulders. She came to the front of the room, and looked at the parents.</p> <p>Her speech was meant for both the parents and the students, so it was not just the parents hearing this for the first time, but the students as well.</p> <p>I think this was a great story, because it was easy for the parents to see the point and be engaged, but the story really engaged the students as she told the story with such enthusiasm and emphasis that the students were captivated by not only</p>

	<p>the story, but the woman herself. It was an effective way to explain how meaningless and inconsequential skin color was, and so incredibly appropriate for MLK day. I was very impressed that they were able to find such an amazing and appropriate speaker that was able to deliver such a powerful message so effortlessly. This woman obviously had a great deal of long-lasting impact.</p>
The end of the event	<p>The end of the production was marked by students running from the bleachers and finding their parents.</p> <p>The parents and children hugged, and parents told their kids that they enjoyed the concert and that they did a great job.</p> <p>All people mingle together and found the friends and the people they wanted to speak to before. Many people also were in line to talk to the principals.</p> <p>It was a diverse group of children, parents, staff, of all cultures, in all states of dress. It was wonderful and left me with a great sense of community and was clearly about MLK and highlighted and celebrated his work.</p> <p>The entire event really allowed the take-home message to be taken, which is that we should all love each other, and we are all the same.</p> <p>In the end, I wrote that this event was more bonding and engaging because of the clear message, as opposed to other events that are for fundraising or just for fun. This event allowed me to see how the community can participate and come together, and how the community makes the event so successful, not just the principal.</p>

	This aligns with some of my ideas, that it is not only the principal that makes a school successful, but the families and students themselves.
Observational Event/ date/ time	African Drumming and Dance Featuring Christian Adeti (February 16, 2018) from 1:15pm. to 2:45pm
Description of Event	Notes Taken (example)
<p>School event for 2nd graders and their families and friends. An African drummer and dancer provided a short concert to introduce audience members to this traditional dance from Ghana which involves peace and love to the whole planet earth.</p> <p>He was a man representing the COMPAS artist company. This company recruits and retains talented artists from around the world, who then bring their performances to the local community.</p> <p>The purpose of this event was knowing the African culture and it was a good opportunity for bringing the community together, but it allowed families to bond and grow together as well.</p>	<p>When I arrived at the school, I was greeted by teachers, principal, and students, all moving about with much energy.</p> <p>Each 2nd grade teacher led their students to the front of the stage in front of the parents.</p> <p>I saw many parents and some of the family members came early to organize the chairs and prepared the potluck.</p> <p>At the corner from the lunchroom, there was a potluck where everyone from the parents and family members brought to share the food together after the show.</p> <p>The food was a variety of crackers, yogurt, popcorn, cookies, fruits, brownies and drinks.</p>
Parent Volunteers	<p>The parents who volunteered came early and helped to set the lunchroom, organized the chairs and food that they brought.</p> <p>Because at the invitation the school told parents and who are going to attend the event welcome to bring snacks or drinks. I bought goldfish crackers and orange and apple juice.</p>
The dancer.	He was approximately 30-years old. He was a black man from West Africa, with a strong voice and large strong and athletic body.

	<p>He wore a red beanie with yellow and green interwoven throughout.</p> <p>He wore a grey shirt, with short sleeves, which was very blousy and provided room to sweat. He was barefoot, with silver bangles around his ankles that served to provide sound to the dancing and emphasize the stomping.</p> <p>He was wearing traditional colored pants, and no other jewelry except for the bangles around his ankles</p>
Initial Observations and Thoughts	<p>When I arrived, I was not sure if the presentation was just for 2nd graders, or if there would be other grades present.</p> <p>I noticed that parents, guardians and grandparents were present for the presentation. It made me happy and encouraged to see grandparents in the audience.</p> <p>I saw so many grandparents and family members there supporting each other and their children, and the artist.</p>
Introducing the Dancer	<p>Ms. K, a 2nd grade teacher, introduced the speaker. She positioned herself in the middle of the stage. She was wearing wide-legged pants and a long flowing shirt, clothes that were comfortable for dancing.</p> <p>She held a microphone in her hand and a stack of papers in the other hand.</p> <p>Ms. K explained how excited she was to have Mr. Adeti perform for the 2nd graders that day, and she provided some background on his dance and where it originated, such as Ghana.</p>

	<p>The students walked up to the stage and stood in uneven lines. They were fidgeting a lot and were not standing still. The assistant teacher was moving through all the children and trying to position them so they were facing the audience. It did not seem like the students knew what they were doing up there, and they were expected to stand quietly and be still, which I thought was a little unrealistic for children that age, as they were too excited about their family members being in the audience to be still.</p> <p>However, they did spend a week practicing the dance, so they were prepared to some extent, but I don't think anyone accounted for the time it would take them to adjust to seeing their family members present.</p>
The Ghana Flag	<p>Once the first class was on the stage, a 2nd grade student, a male student, read to the audience the meaning of the Ghana flag.</p> <p>He read the meaning of each other's colors. The green meant natural resources, the yellow represents gold, the red symbolizes blood, and the black star represents black skin.</p>
An excellent dancer and young student	<p>When Mr. Adeti started, he gave a description of the dance and provided background to the dance. He then began drumming and singing, and the 2nd graders sang with him. There was a girl that was in the middle of the stage. She was wearing a yellow dress, and was dressed traditionally as a Indian girl. She also had on sprites and was very good at dancing.</p> <p>I think they put her in the middle because she was dressed traditionally and because she is very good at dancing. The dancing</p>

	<p>was similar to Indian dancing, which she is really good at. I know her well, because she is a friend of my daughters.</p>
Dancing Continues	<p>In the audience, there was a young girl, 2-years old, sitting in her mother's lap. She was wearing a pink jacket and was holding a brown teddy bear. When the dancing and music would begin, the little girl would joyfully dance in her mother's lap, moving her teddy bear to the music.</p> <p>Another little girl was standing next to her mother and was enjoying dancing to the music as well. She was copying the dancing of the students, and she was trying to learn how to do the dances. All the people around her were smiling, and enjoyed watching her dance.</p> <p>At this moment, I really like and enjoy how people and young kids are able to see and learn from another cultural and language.</p> <p>There is no barrier at that time. It made people happy to see such young children connecting with the music and having a good time enjoying creative movement and hearing a new sound of music.</p> <p>I thought this was a great early example for these young girls, to start understanding school as just a place to go to sit and learn and do homework. These early experiences can help the girls understand school as a place to go to have fun, dance, and learn a new culture.</p>
Spacing and Movement in the Event.	<p>There were two doors on the stage, so the students could come in from two directions. They used one door to exit. Ms. J. class was next, which was a combined class of 1st and 2nd graders.</p>

	<p>The kids were much different in sizes being that they were different ages. They stayed together for the entire year. When they came to the stage they were all dressed in black. A boy started telling a story that was difficult to hear. Then another student finished the story, again hard to hear, and the song started.</p> <p>Mr. Adeti began drumming off to the side and allowed the students to really be the focus on the stage. The song began with a chant, and then moved into an energetic stomping dance. They were very good, dancing in unison and were well-practiced.</p> <p>This was a large classroom, and the students seemed large, taking up a great amount of space on the stage. They were also mostly dressed in black, with one girl standing out in bright pink.</p> <p>Another girl on the far-left side was looking at her mother throughout. I was confused when I saw Ms. J. class as I recognized the students as being both 1st and 2nd graders. I also noticed how much taller some students were than others, and I wondered why this class was structured as it was.</p> <p>Later I asked about it, and learned that this class is indeed a group of 1st and 2nd graders, combined into one class. They remain together throughout the entire year.</p>
Mothers model Behavior	<p>The girl who kept looking at her mother was struggling to stay with the music. I thought that the mother was making it more difficult for her by trying to guide and direct her from the audience.</p> <p>The girl ended up just standing on the stage looking at her mother trying to understand what her mother was saying and doing.</p>

	<p>The mother was very much distracting her, and as such, she didn't get a chance to really engage and be involved in the dance as many of the other students.</p>
The end of the dance	<p>At the end of the classroom dances, Mr. Adeti took the stage by himself.</p> <p>He held his drums in front of him and faced the audience. The audience was a sea of children and parents, all were wandering around and no one was very organized. He called out into the crowd to pay attention to him, but no one heard.</p> <p>He called out again for the audience's attention, but there was still so much commotion that no one really paid too much attention.</p> <p>Looking at his face, he seemed a tad frustrated but not discouraged. He tried another tactic. He started stomping and drumming and called out a long deep chant. That worked. All the students and family member turned around and almost immediately started dancing.</p> <p>He successfully gained everyone's attention.</p> <p>Being one man, he did not have any help or assistance with his presentation, so he was really alone in getting everyone's attention.</p> <p>The parents were busy attending to their children, the children were scattered all over, and the teacher's were focused on keeping their students from getting lost or wandering around.</p>
Saying Hello	<p>After the performances were over, I began to walk around the cafeteria. I said hello to parents and students that I knew.</p>

	<p>I went to Ms. K. and thanked her for organizing the performance.</p> <p>Everyone seemed happy and enjoyed dancing and sharing food.</p>
The principal	<p>The principal was in the cafeteria the entire time, and I noticed her throughout the entire performance.</p> <p>She was blending in with the rest of the crowd, wearing a t-shirt and jeans. She participated in the dancing and was part of the crowd, supporting the teacher and the students, but being in the audience and participating in the dance.</p> <p>At the end, she went to the parents to say hi and thank them for coming and supporting the students. She was walking around with a big smile, waving, sharing food with the family.</p> <p>She was dressed casually which spoke to her desire to also participate in the dancing and have freedom to move. What struck me was that she was comfortable being an observer. I would think that some principals would want to take the opportunity of having everyone together to address the crowd or provide an introduction to the dancer, formally, on stage.</p>

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Parents:

1. What does your child like about school?
2. What do you like about your child's school?
3. Do you feel welcome in your child's school?
 - a. Tell me a story about what makes you feel that way.
 - b. How does this school compare to yours growing up?
4. Do you get involved in school activities or events?
 - a. If **yes**: What kinds of events? How often? Why?
 - b. If **no**: Why not? What gets in the way?
5. Do you feel that the school asks you to be involved?
 - a. Who reaches out? How do they reach out? Who needs to do better at reaching out?
 - b. What could the school do to help you be more involved?
 - c. Would any particular kinds of school activities get you involved? If so, what kinds?
6. Describe the principal at the school. What can you tell me about him/her?
 - a. Do you like his/her leadership style?
 - b. Does s/he make you feel welcomed?
 - c. What could be improved upon?
7. Do you think that participating at the school can impact your child's achievement? Can you explain?
8. Is there anything else you would like to talk about with regard to parental involvement at your child's school?

Interview Questions for School's Principal:

1. How do you define parental involvement?
2. What role should a parent play in their child's school and education?
3. What school strategies do you think most strongly impact parental involvement?

- a. What gets parents involved?
 - b. What do you think alienates parents?
- 4. What can a principal do to get parents involved?
 - a. Do you try to do these things?
 - b. What are the limits to what a principal can change?
- 5. Do you have a certain “leadership style”?
 - a. How does your style differ from those of other principals?
- 6. Tell me about parental involvement at your school in particular.
 - a. What activities or events do you have for parents?
 - b. Do you feel these events are successful at involving parents? Can you give me an example to better explain your answer?
- 7. Tell me about your role, as a principal, in facilitating parental involvement.
 - a. Do you personally interact with parents at these activities/events?
 - b. Do you send out invitations, or otherwise have any contact with parents, before or after activities/events for parent?
 - c. What do you think matters most (words, tone, mood, body language, content) when communicating with parents?
- 8. Tell me about the relationship between teachers and parents.
 - a. Do you have a role to play in facilitating communication between them?
- 9. Tell me about the relationship between the school and the local community.
 - a. Does this relationship seem to have an effect on parental involvement?
 - b. How important is your relationship to the local community?
- 10. What challenges do you think parents in your district face as they attempt to become involved in their children’s education?
 - a. Do you try to mitigate these challenges?
 - i. If **so**, how?
 - ii. If **not**, why not?
- 11. Is there anything else you, as a principal, would like me to know about parental involvement?

Interview Questions for Teachers:

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself:
 - a. How long have you been a teacher?
 - b. What is your teaching focus now?
2. How do you define parental involvement?
3. What role should a parent play in their child's school and education?
 - a. Should parents be involved in school-related decision-making, events, or activities?
4. How does parental involvement at this school compare to what you know about other schools?
 - a. Any thoughts on why this is?
5. What, if any, are some ways parents can get involved at your school?
 - a. Do parents take these opportunities, or ignore them?
 - b. Is it helpful to have parents get involved with school activities?
6. What could parents do that would be helpful to you as a classroom teacher?
 - a. Have there been times when parents were not helpful?
 - b. What do you do when a parent is not being helpful?
7. Do you think teachers are important to the relationship between parents and the school?
 - a. If **so**, how?
 - b. If **not**, why not?
 - c. How do you communicate with parents?
8. Does your school try to get parents involved in their child's education?
 - a. What strategies (emails, events, activities, food provided) work, and what don't?
 - b. Who (such as teachers, the principal, other community members) do you think is best at getting parents to the school? Who is worst?
9. What can a principal in particular do to get parents involved?
 - a. What would be the ideal actions for a principal to take with regard to parental involvement?
 - b. Does your principal try to do these things?

- c. How does the principal at *this* school interact with parents?
- d. What are the limits to what a principal can do?
- 10. What leadership characteristics do you think are important when it comes to communicating with parents?
 - a. Who at your school embodies these characteristics?
 - b. Does the principal embody these characteristics? Does anyone else?
- 11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Interview Questions for Staff (Non-Faculty):

- 1. Tell me a little bit about yourself:
 - a. How long have you been at this school?
 - b. What is your role?
- 2. How do you define parental involvement?
- 3. What role should a parent play in their child's school and education?
 - a. Should parents be involved in school-related decision-making, events, or activities?
- 4. How does parental involvement at this school compare to others in the area?
 - a. Any thoughts about why?
- 5. What are some ways parents have been involved at your school, if any?
 - a. Is it helpful to have parents get involved with school activities?
 - b. Is parental involvement a good thing or a bad thing for student success?
- 6. Does your school try to get parents involved in their child's education?
 - a. What strategies (emails, events, activities, food provided) work, and what don't?
 - b. Who (such as teachers, the principal, other community members) do you think is best at getting parents to the school? Who is worst?
- 7. What can a principal in particular do to get parents involved?
 - a. What would be the ideal actions for a principal to take with regard to parental involvement?
 - b. Does your principal try to do these things?

- c. How does the principal at *this* school interact with parents?
 - d. What are the limits to what a principal can do?
- 8. What leadership characteristics do you think are important when it comes to communicating with parents?
 - a. Who at your school embodies these characteristics?
 - b. Does the principal embody these characteristics? Does anyone else?
- 9. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix F: Interview Date and Participants Description

Name/Role of Interviewee/ Date	Description
<p>Mrs. E., parent, 5th grade student March 19, 2018</p>	<p>Mrs. E is a High School teacher and has two sons who are twins at the middle school (Grades 6 - 8). I interviewed Mrs. E. because she has experience teaching, and also because she had experience being a parent with children at this school from Kindergarten to 5th grade.</p> <p>The interview was in-person for 45 minutes. Mrs. E is very involved and active in the schools here children attend.</p> <p>Mrs. E is engaged in all of her sons' school activities and she offers many important insights from the perspective of an engaged parent. I captured these insights in our interview.</p> <p>I was particularly interested in her thoughts about community involvement in her childrens' schools, as well as parental involvement. This was the focus of my data collection.</p> <p>Mrs. E is a very involved parent. As a parent at the school myself, I often see Mrs. E there. Mrs. E provides a positive energy when she is there. Her volunteer work is marked with enthusiasm and positivism which extends to everyone.</p> <p>All the teachers, parents, and family members know her and enjoy talking to her because she is friendly and supportive.</p>
<p>Mrs. W., 3rd grade teacher April 25, 2018</p>	<p>I interviewed Mrs. W in person. The interview lasted 40 minutes. Mrs. W is well-known among parents at the school because of her teaching. Parents often comment that she is a great teacher. Mrs. W is responsive. She responds to emails quickly, honors parents' time, and is always respectful and polite.</p> <p>Mrs. W welcomed the opportunity to participate in this study.</p> <p>I was interested in understanding how Mrs. W felt about parent involvement in the school, and what the challenges were. My interview questions focused on these points.</p> <p>Mrs. W has been a teacher for 25 years. She has been a teacher in the current school for eight years. She has taught at schools in</p>

	<p>many parts of the Midwest, including Minneapolis, Madison, WI and the suburbs of Chicago.</p> <p>Mrs. W has been a classroom teacher, a Reading Teacher, a Gifted and Talented teacher, an Enrichment Social Studies, Literacy, Science teacher and more.</p> <p>Mrs. W has worked with a wide range of students at all ability levels and from many different backgrounds and cultures. She states that, “Third grade is my favorite and the grade I've taught the longest.”</p>
<p>Mrs. Q., Principal of Elementary School (K- 5) May 20, 2020</p>	<p>My interview with Mrs. Q, the school principal, was conducted virtually using Zoom. The interview lasted 57 minutes. Mrs. Q lived within the neighborhood of the school, and she also attended the school herself as a child.</p> <p>Mrs. Q was an English teacher for over 25 years. She has a PhD in school administration and leadership which allowed her to take a position as an administrator.</p> <p>Before she was a principal at her current school, she served as principal at another Public Elementary School and mentored new principals and assistant principals throughout the district.</p> <p>According to the school website, Mrs. Q is, “the school principal is the first person you will meet when visiting the school. You will see that she sets a warm and welcoming tone for children and families.”</p>
<p>Mrs. H.U., 4th grade teacher June 18, 2020</p>	<p>I interviewed Mrs. HU, a 4th grade teacher, virtually using Zoom. Our interview lasted 55mins. She has been a teacher for 25 years. She has taught 1st grade, 6th grade, and 4th grade at the school.</p> <p>Mrs. HU told me that “I actually wanted to go to law school, and when I was looking, my siblings said, ‘Oh, you should do something else.’ They advised, they suggested elementary ed. I love kids, so it was an easy fit for me to start. I had no idea at first. I wasn't thinking about teaching, but Hamline has a good elementary education program there for teachers. I ended up just loving the program.”</p> <p>Mrs. HU used to have a kindergarten license, too, but she has since let her kindergarten license expire. After five years from</p>

	<p>receiving her undergraduate degree, she got her masters from Hamline University in Elementary Education- Cohort Style. Her husband is an Elementary teacher at a different school.</p>
<p>Mrs. H.A., parent of a 4th grade student. July 12, 2020</p>	<p>I interviewed Mrs. HA, a parent of a 4th grade student at the school virtually using Zoom. Our interview lasted 50 minutes.</p> <p>Mrs. HA was previously a teacher at an elementary school. She is currently receiving her PhD in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Minnesota.</p> <p>Mrs. HA currently has a daughter enrolled at the elementary school. In addition, her son, now in Middle School, was a former student at the school.</p> <p>I was interested in interviewing Mrs. HA because I often see her at the school and she is very friendly and approachable. She is often in attendance at school events and volunteers for field trips.</p> <p>Mrs. HA has a different perspective and point of view regarding parent involvement because she is not American. Her two children started at the school from Kindergarten. I was interested to learn more about her experience.</p>
<p>Mrs. S., parent of a 2 grade and 5th grade students February 14, 2021</p>	<p>Mrs. S. went to college at the University of Wisconsin Madison and studied Women's Studies and Jewish Studies. After that, she did some graduate work in anthropology. She currently runs a consulting business where she does research of her home in St. Paul.</p>
<p>Mrs. B., school counselor February 19, 2021</p>	<p>Mrs. B is the school counselor at the elementary school where she has worked for 7 years. She has been working in the education field for 27 years, working at both elementary and middle schools. She studied to be a parent educator for two years.</p>
<p>Mr. X., parent of 2nd and 5th grade students May 6, 2021</p>	<p>Mr. X works in health information technology. He is a project and program manager. He has a 2nd and 5th grader who are students at the elementary school. He also has a freshman son who is a former student of the elementary school.</p>
<p>Mr. Y., ELL teacher. May 7, 2021</p>	<p>Mr. Y. is from Somalia. He lived in Egypt from 1992 till 2009. He obtained a master's degree in Sharia. International. He came to the USA in 2009, and is currently an ELL teacher. He is working towards his master's degree in public and nonprofit organizations. He has one son and three daughters.</p>

<p>Mr. J, 2 grade teacher. May10, 2021</p>	<p>Mr. J grew up in the suburbs of Minneapolis. He went to the University of Minnesota for a bachelor's degree in English. He worked as a long-term substitute teacher in St. Paul, and is currently a 2th grade teacher. He has been teaching for over 20 years.</p>
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Appendix G: Example of Document Data Collection

Type of Document	Description
Emails/Official announcements/Newsletters	<p>Reviewing emails that school sent to parents were important in my data collection. This correspondence was a compilation of emails, attachments, announcements and newsletters that the school updated parents and family with everything new and invited parents to the table in order to give them an opportunity to participate as a volunteer in school events or activities.</p> <p>Parents were invited to ask questions about what was happening and allow them to discuss what they might be able to volunteer.</p>
Events calendar on the school website	<p>The purpose of this review is to see how many events that the school has during the year. This review provided information about what the events were, how often they were hosted, and what grades were invited.</p>
Meeting Minutes	<p>Meeting Minutes are written records of the Board of Education or Committee of the Board meetings. They describe the events of the meeting and may include a list of attendees, a statement of the issues considered by the participants, and related responses or decisions for the issues.</p> <p>The purpose of meeting minutes to record action points, including what actions have been decided upon and voting results. Secondly, they record summaries of presentations and discussions held at the meeting. In my data collection, I reviewed meeting minutes in order to look at what the school does to help parents and community to get engaged at school. I looked for the strategies and ways the school principal invited parental involvement.</p>

Appendix H: Example Quote and Summary

Quote	Summary of Quote
<i>“My understanding is there's research that supports the fact that when parents are involved at the school in whatever way that means, the students end up being more successful” (Mrs. Q, school’s principal interview, May 20, 2020).</i>	The principal is aware of research that shows that children are more successful when their parents are involved in a way that works for them. Indicates that the principal values and follows research and best-practices.
<i>“I talked with our advisory council, and with our staff a little bit about we need to improve those curriculum nights so more people come. We get about half of the families come to the curriculum night, so more people come, and also that they are more accessible for families” (Mrs. Q, school’s principal interview, May 20, 2020).</i>	The principal wants parents to come to the school, and it is very important that the parent feels welcome in the school. The principal wants the teachers and staff and other people at the school to promote parent involvement and make sure that the teachers and staff actively encourage parents to attend the curriculum nights.
<i>“A long time ago, a couple or a few principals ago, we did have a Hmong PTA at our school. There was SAPSA and then there was a separate meeting night for a Hmong group of parents... (Mrs. HU, 4th grade teacher interview, June 18, 2020).</i>	The principal was involved in making sure the school was inclusive and that all parents, regardless of their language spoken, could interact and communicate with the teachers and staff.
<i>“I think our best experience was in second grade with Mrs. E. letting us volunteer in the class. She was very organized and how we could volunteer in second grade on a weekly basis. And she was extremely grateful” (Mrs. S, parent of a 2 grade and 5th grade students interview, February 14, 2021).</i>	The parents enjoy a healthy relationship and communication with the teachers with facilitates engagement.

Appendix I: Document Content

Document Review	Description
Emails	<p>Dear Parents of SCHOOL X:</p> <p>This is a reminder that we will be holding community meetings next week to give you an update about our school. On the agenda for the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next year's budget and staffing • Results from the family survey this spring • Update on our parent/guardian involvement group <p>I hope you will join us at one of the meetings. They will take place in the school library.</p> <p>Please pick day and time that works for you:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Monday, April 22 - 5:00 PM</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Monday, April 22 - 7:00 PM</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Tuesday, April 23 - 8:30 AM</p> <p>A Somali interpreter will be available for all meetings. If you would like another language interpreted, please email xxxxx</p> <p>Thank you very much for your support and engagement with the school. I look forward to talking with you all about next year</p> <p>Q. School Principal</p> <hr/> <p>Email Message to Parents of School X: November 2017</p> <p>You're Invited: School X Presents the Following Courses</p> <p>"Parenting in the Digital Age"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Meet in Cafeteria</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Monday December 4th 5:30-8:00</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(Dinner and childcare included)</p> <p>Description: While iPads and other technology are powerful learning tools, it is important for families to set boundaries for how technology is used at home. This seminar will share information to help parents make choices for your family. Together we will learn about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Importance of setting boundaries for technology use * Topics about technology use that students learn in school * Communication and making a plan to use this information at school <p>Register by: Wednesday 11/29. Contact or Email xxxx. Phone:</p>

	<p>XXXXXX.</p> <hr/> <p>Dear School X Parents:</p> <p>Do you LOVE this school? Are you willing to share your love with prospective families? One of the most important ways that we recruit and enroll new students is by offering tours to prospective families. We are looking for parent volunteers to offer school tours from mid-Dec 2018 through March 2019. If you are bilingual, we need you. Or, if you'd like to co-tour with another parent who knows another language, we can try to make that happen. Just let us know.</p> <hr/> <p>Dear School X Parents:</p> <p>This is a reminder that we will be holding community meetings next week to give you an update about our school... A Somali interpreter will be available for all meetings. If you would like another language interpreted, please email [us].</p> <p>Thank you very much for your support and engagement...</p> <p>signed: Principal</p> <hr/> <p>Hello [Parents]:</p> <p>This is our last call for any Great Gathering donations for the Fall Festival! Great Gatherings are hosted events that we sell tickets to as a school fundraiser. Do you have a skill that you could teach? Are you a great cook? Do you knit or sew? Do you throw a great party (Kid or Adult).</p> <p>Thank you for your continued support of our school. Please contact [me] with any questions or if you'd like to host a Great Gathering.</p>
Meeting Minutes	<p>We received a good response to the recent survey that the school families were asked to complete. The survey results are currently being analyzed. Discussions have occurred in Site Council meetings about how to use the survey data to inform the school budgeting decisions. A presentation on the survey results will be included in the budget meetings. The school Principal will also talk about the merger of Site Council and the school at the budget meetings.</p> <hr/> <p>The annual plant sale fundraising event will be held Wed 5/9-5/10 beside the Langford Rec Center. Plants will be delivered</p>

	<p>on 5/8, and then the sale will be held on the 9th and 10th. Families can pre-order online with the Square on-line platform. Succulents will be offered for sale for the first time this year. Many volunteers will be needed to unload plants on the 8th. If anyone is interested in helping with this event, please contact a SAPSA member. The goal of the sale this year is \$8500.</p> <hr/> <p>The Book Fair will occur in conjunction with the Spring Carnival again. This past fall's book fair was the 2nd largest book fair in School X's history (\$4279 profits).</p> <hr/> <p>Known volunteer needs: Plant sale, spring carnival. Due to the construction fencing, we will not be doing the spring school picnic this year. Ms. J is working on assembling a list of volunteer leads and how long each plan to stay for activities throughout the year. She will also compile a list of the number of volunteers needed for each event throughout the year as well. She suggested that we host a volunteer appreciation event this spring – coffee and cookies. Either ask for donations or use school hospitality funds. Haven't done any planning yet for the Talent Show. Mrs. K. to take over the Talent Show next year. 5th grade dinner – not the school event. However, the tradition has been that 4th grade families help plan and host the event.</p>
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